



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

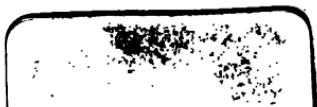
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

THE
LORD'S HOST
OR
LESSONS FROM
THE BOOK OF
JOSHUA

W. BURTON.



600085916Z



185916Z

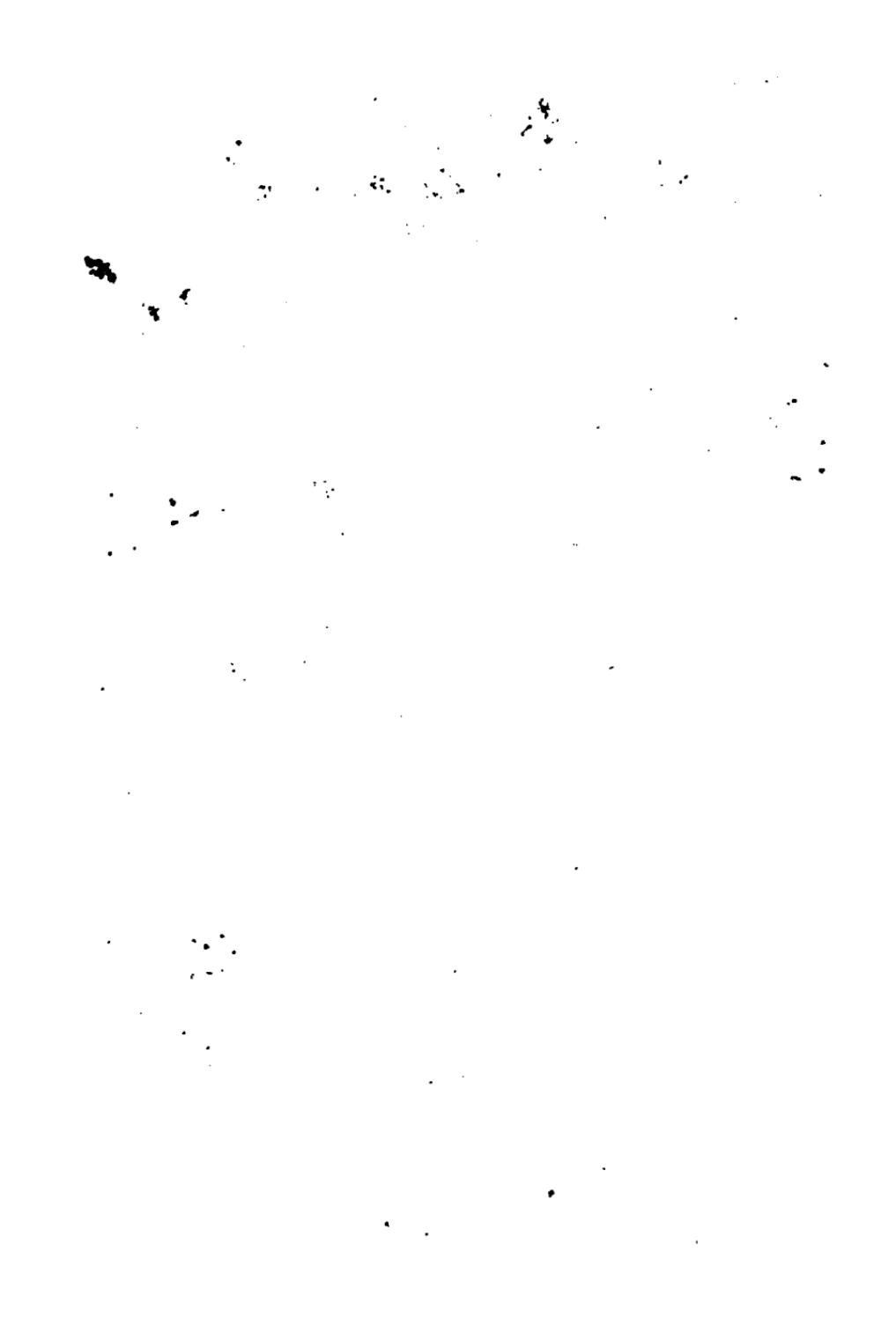


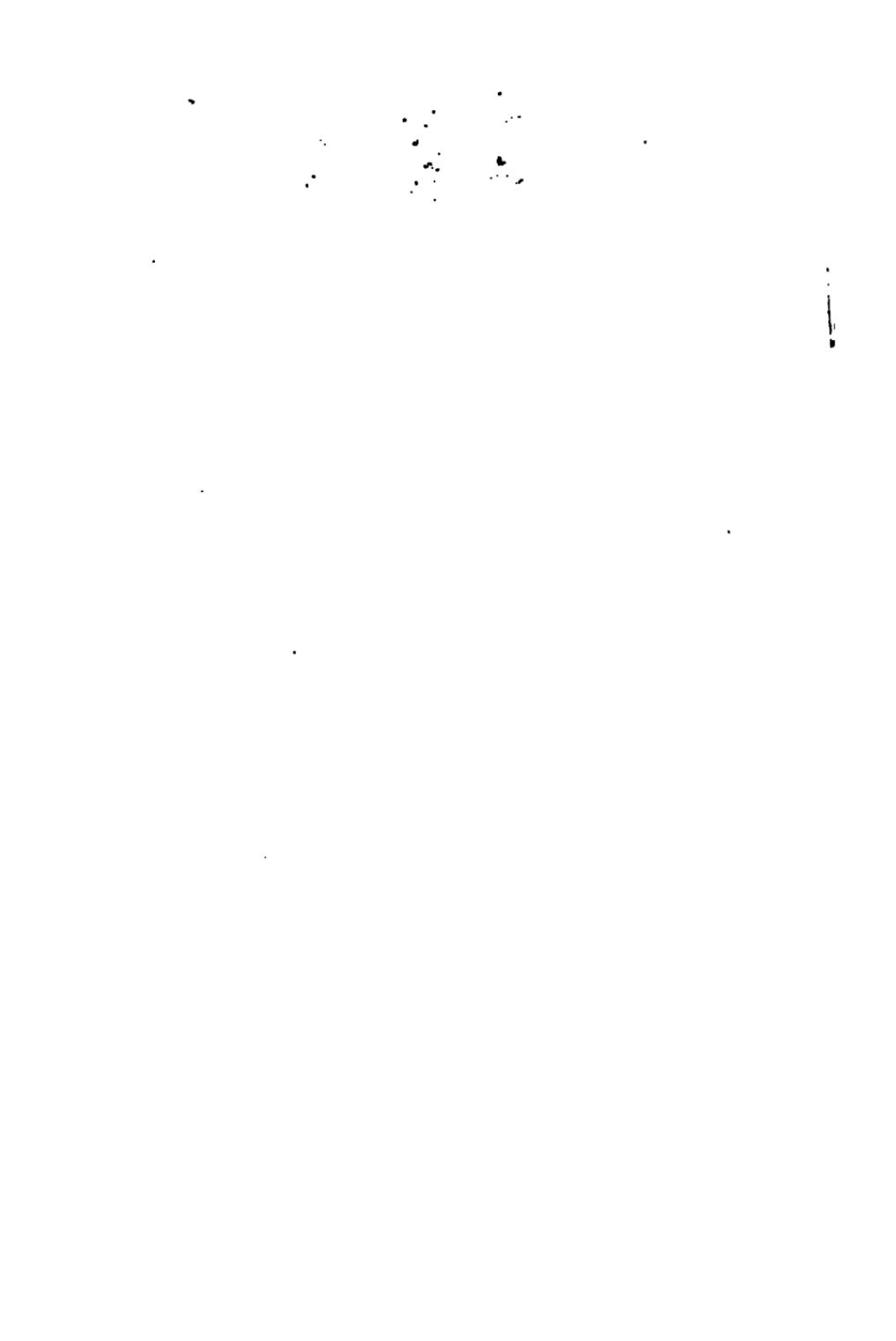
5916Z



0916Z









THE JORDAN NEAR JERICHO.
From a Photograph by Bonfils.

THE LORD'S HOST;

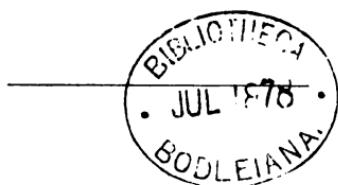
OR,

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF

JOSHUA.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE WILLIAM BUTLER, M.A.



EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM OLIPHANT AND COMPANY.
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS AND COMPANY.

1878.

101 424



TO

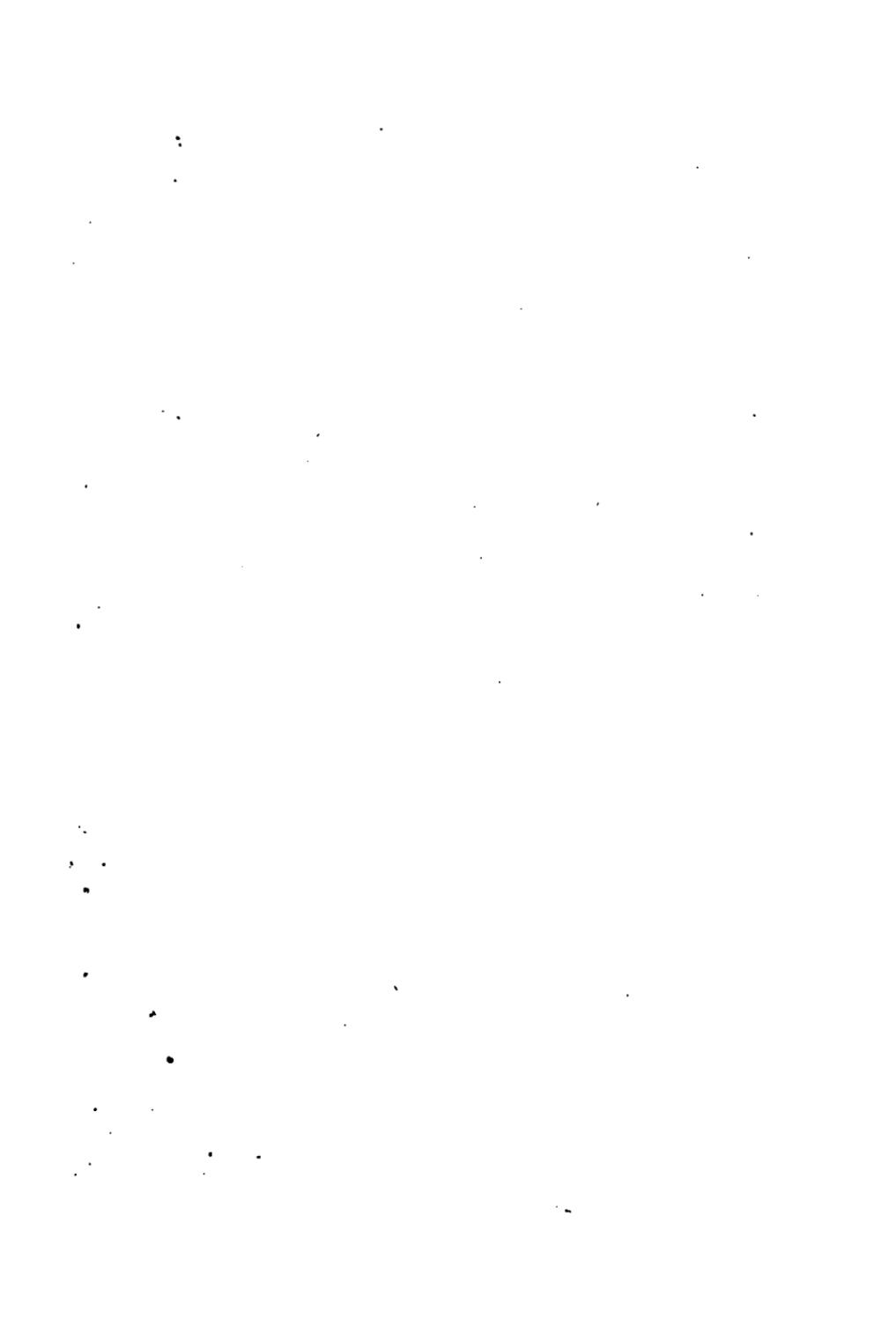
CHARLES STUART PARKER, ESQUIRE,

Member of Parliament,

WITH AFFECTION AND ESTEEM,

I INSCRIBE

THESE LECTURES.





P R E F A C E.

God has seen good that a large portion of the Bible should be in the form of historic records. Great honour is set upon Scripture history in the Scriptures themselves. David in the Psalms, the Apostles in their sermons and epistles, and the LORD JESUS Himself quote the sacred narratives as the very Word of God, and deduce thence rich instruction and consolation. "*All these things,*" says the Apostle Paul, in reference to the experience of the Israelites, "*happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*" Shall we, then, be more evangelical than He Whose HOLY SPIRIT directed the proportions of the contents of the Bible? Shall we be more spiritual than the holy men of God themselves who delighted in the early Scripture histories, and pass by this portion of the

Word of GOD as a barren field? Shall we confine our studies to such directly didactic and experimental portions of the Bible as the Book of Psalms and the epistles of the New Testament? Nay, rather that we may enjoy these and profit by them more, let us also diligently study the dealings of GOD with His people as recorded in the Old Testament.

It is not too much to say that history is the foundation on which doctrine rests. If this foundation be surely laid, the superstructure may be expected to be strong. The more the facts and events are apprehended, the more, as a rule, will exhortation and consolation be felt.

In Scripture history, the providence of GOD may be traced working out plans of mercy and of judgment. While reading these records of early ages, we seem like those who stand at a distance where the pattern of the whole can be discerned, and though in reference to our own experience we stand, as it were, too near to see any beauty, we have learned from these sanctified studies to believe that here also all is working together for good.

In Scripture history, we note especially the providence of GOD in reference to the coming of CHRIST. We see, stage by stage, the slow and yet marked preparation for "*the fulness*

of time." In Scripture history, we see precepts embodied in practice. Abstract truth often fails to arrest attention, but when the lives of the actual men and women of bygone days are before us for warning and example, when their names, their circumstances, and all their moral portraiture are before us, photographed by the light of inspiration, who can neglect the lessons? In Scripture history, moreover, the person and work of the Redeemer are foreshadowed. The Word of GOD expressly states that "*all the Scriptures*" taught of CHRIST (Luke xxiv. 27); and refers not merely to prophetic descriptions, but also to persons and transactions as being types of CHRIST and His kingdom. Hard and repellent is the theory of those who would restrict the cases of allegory to those particular examples that have received Divine sanction in the New Testament—forbidding us, for instance, to see in Joseph's experience any adumbration of the Saviour. And yet this is but the recoil of common sense from the absurdity of allegorizing to excess. From Origen down to the present day, there have been those who, with a fine fancy, have spiritualized every detail of description, until the sacred history is made to appear like a box of puzzles, curiously con-

trived to take every possible shape for the amusement of the ingenious. Who, for instance, can repress a smile when such an interpretation as the following is offered of the incident recorded 1 Sam. vi. 14?—“These two kine stood still and lowed no more when they came to the field of Joshua, dwelling in Beth-shemesh, that is, the house of the sun, to note, that all the kine, and calves, and sacrifices, and ceremonies of the old law were to cease and stand still when they came to JESUS, Who is the true Joshua, dwelling in heaven, which is the true Beth-shemesh.”

May the spirit of a sound mind be ours! May we be neither so blind as to neglect what is written for our learning; nor so clairvoyant as to discover more than was in the mind of the HOLY GHOST! May that “unction from the *HOLY ONE*” be upon us as we study this full and precious portion of the Bible, that we may be guided to the truth, and may grow thereby!

Commentaries on the Book of Joshua are scarce in proportion to its rich contents. There are, among recent expositions, a few volumes of excellent discourses, such as those by the late Rev. C. D. Marston; S. A. Blackwood, Esq.; and Miss Smiley. There are,

moreover, good critical commentaries on Joshua, such as those of Keil; Fay (in Lange's series); also the smaller works of W. Groser, Esq., of the London Sunday School Union; and of Dr. Howard Crosby, Chancellor of the University of New York. Bush's "Notes Critical and Practical, &c.," are full of information. Very valuable, too, is Dr. Thornley Smith's scholarly work on "Joshua and his Times." Dr. Edersheim's "Israel in Canaan," though among the smallest in bulk, is among the most useful of the works on the subject.* Calvin's commentary on Joshua, the last of his writings, and perhaps below his standard of excellence elsewhere, nevertheless contains much suggestive matter. Saurin's "Discours Historiques" represent the full range of the biblical criticism of his day, but are in an evangelical point of view meagre. Matthew Henry, always rich and suggestive in spiritual reflections, is

* To the above list of modern works on the Book of Joshua must now be added another that has appeared since the delivery of these lectures, namely, the Rev. F. G. MARCHANT's full and carefully prepared "*Homiletical Commentary on the Book of Joshua*," one of the volumes of "*The Preacher's Commentary*" (London: Dickinson). SEATON's "*The Church in Canaan; or, Heirs in Possession receiving the Promises*," is an older book on the same subject, by an excellent writer.

peculiarly happy in his treatment of several portions of this book. Bishop Hall, too, must not be passed by, who has touched on some of the topics of this book in his “Contemplations” with his wonted vivacity. While acknowledging the labours of his predecessors in the field, and especially those of Andrew Masius, the author of a large and learned exposition (Antwerp: A.D. 1574), it yet seemed to the author that there was room for another effort to unfold the teaching, not merely of selected passages, but of the entire narrative, and that, moreover, the reconsideration of the historical details would be both interesting and profitable.

Such, then, is the double scope of the present volume: namely, to enforce the spiritual and practical lessons; and, at the same time, to illustrate and explain the history of the Book of Joshua.

The writer, while conscientiously studying his subject in its critical aspect, has yet earnestly sought the aid of GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, that it may be made profitable to the souls of the readers.

The Book of Joshua may be divided into three sections, according to the three stages of Israel’s progress of which it treats. It contains the history of—

I. Israel's Entrance into Canaan ;
II. Israel's Conquest of Canaan ; and
III. Israel's Settlement in Canaan, under the government of Joshua, the divinely appointed successor of Moses, whose name accordingly gives the title to the narrative. The last two chapters, containing Joshua's parting exhortations to Israel, and the mention of his death, form an Appendix or Conclusion to the book.

The general title, "THE LORD'S HOST" (see Josh. v. 15), seemed suitably to comprise the contents of the Book of Joshua, as indicating the Divine appointment of the events recorded ; and as suggesting profitable analogies to the case of those who are called to fight the good fight of faith, as soldiers of JESUS CHRIST. (1 Tim. i. 18 ; vi. 12 ; 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.)

These lectures are not exactly sermons, much matter being included which would have been omitted, had it not been attempted to make the course as complete an exposition of the entire Book of Joshua as possible : at the same time, being originally prepared for pulpit discourses they have been cast in a homiletic mould ; and although it would have been easy to have presented them in the form of series of homogeneous discourses of a partly descriptive, partly didactic character, or again in the form

of a continuous commentary, it has been decided to leave them as they were actually delivered, including, however, certain paragraphs which were then omitted through want of time at the preacher's disposal. If there be an appearance of stiffness and formality in the heads and divisions; on the other hand, the grouping and classifying of the features of a narrative, or of the lessons that it teaches, may perhaps be, if less pleasing to the eye, more helpful to the memory.

Besides the works on Joshua quoted above, other books have been consulted. The names of the several authors are generally given in the foot-notes. Especial mention must, however, be made of Kitto's Biblical Cyclopædia, from which much valuable information has been obtained.

The writer ventures to request that while each lecture is studied, the Bible itself may be opened at the chapter under consideration, and that the sacred narrative may be constantly referred to. Upon compliance with this suggestion the usefulness of this little volume will much depend.

G. W. B.

26, BROMPTON SQUARE, LONDON,
May, 1878.



CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

	PAGE
The Earthly Captain of the LORD's Host	1

LECTURE II.

The LORD's Order to His Host; or, the Campaign Com- menced	13
---	----

LECTURE III.

An Unexpected Ally of the LORD's Host; or, Rahab and her Faith	30
---	----

LECTURE IV.

The Entrance of the LORD's Host into Canaan; or, the Passage across the Jordan	49
---	----

LECTURE V.

The Double Monument of the Passage of the LORD's Host across the Jordan	64
--	----

LECTURE VI.

The Consecration of the LORD's Host at Gilgal; or, a Revival	^{PAGE} 80
--	--------------------

LECTURE VII.

The Heavenly Captain of the LORD's Host; or, the Vision at Jericho	101
--	-----

LECTURE VIII.

The First Victory of the LORD's Host; or, the Fall of Jericho	120
---	-----

LECTURE IX.

The Retreat of the LORD's Host; or, an Accursed Thing in the Camp	140
---	-----

LECTURE X.

The Second Victory of the LORD's Host; or, the Capture of Ai	158
--	-----

LECTURE XI.

The Consecration of the LORD's Host at Ebal and Gerizim	181
---	-----

LECTURE XII.

The LORD's Host Deceived; or, the League with the Gibeonites	203
--	-----

LECTURE XIII.

The LORD Fighting for His Host; or, the Kings of Canaan Smitten	225
---	-----

CONTENTS.

xv

LECTURE XIV.

	PAGE
The Inheritance of the LORD's Host; or, the Allotment of Canaan	248

LECTURE XV.

Blood-guiltiness Removed from the LORD's Host; or, the Cities of Refuge	270
---	-----

LECTURE XVI.

The LORD's Host Divided; or, the Departure of the Two and a-Half Tribes	288
---	-----

LECTURE XVII.

Joshua's First Farewell; or, the LORD's Host and the Nations	309
--	-----

LECTURE XVIII.

Joshua's Last Farewell; or, the Final Consecration of the LORD's Host at Shechem	326
--	-----

APPENDICES.

A. <i>The Angel of the LORD.</i> By Professor GAUSSSEN	353
B. <i>The Trumpet's Blast.</i> By the Rev. G. A. ROGERS	364
C. <i>On Family Prayer.</i> By Pastor RECOLIN	368





LECTURE I.

THE EARTHLY CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST.

“Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses’ Minister.”

CHAPTER I. 1.



N opening the Book of Joshua, two questions arise. We first ask, “Did Joshua write it himself?” and then again we ask, “What was Joshua like?” It is natural, when reading a book, to wish to know who was the author; it is natural, also, when studying the history of stirring times, to wish to picture to ourselves the personal characteristics of the principal characters.

To neither question does the book itself supply any explicit answer. There is no dedication or signature that directly states its human authorship. Nor, again, are there any descriptive details, or other materials wherewith to construct a biography of the central

figure.* What was the character, and what was the office of Nun, Joshua's father? Had Joshua any brothers, and did they distinguish themselves? Had he a wife? Had he children? Doubtless he had (xxiv. 15), but no information is furnished to gratify our curiosity as to any of these points. And yet this very silence tells us something in reference to both the authorship of the book, and the character of the man.

The omission of any traits of character, personal adventures, private reflections, throughout the narrative, seems to mark Joshua out as himself the modest writer.† For while holding the plenary inspiration of this, as of all the rest of the Word of God, we yet hold that the human will is left in a manner free beneath the Divine control, and that the individual characteristics of human authorship are not obliterated.

That the records prepared by Joshua were completed by a later hand is evident,‡ for (as in the case of the

* Henry has not failed to notice this omission. In reference to the first chapter he says: “The book begins with the history, *not of Joshua's life*. . . . but of his reign and government.”

† It is consistent that the title, “*the servant of the LORD*,” assigned to Joshua in the conclusion (xxiv. 29), is never assumed in the course of the narrative.

‡ The record of the conquest of Leshem by the Danites (xix. 47), if this is, as would appear, the same event as that which took place in the degenerate days when there was no king in Israel (Judg. xviii. 27—29; xvii. 6); also the story of the conquests of Caleb and of Othniel (xv. 13—19; see Judg. i. 10—15), are examples of additions to Joshua's personal narratives made after his death.

The mention of Cabul (xix. 27), quoted by Masius, is not

histories penned by Moses) his own death is recorded; mention is also made of the piety of his immediate survivors (xxiv. 29—31). It is expressly stated, in reference to the final covenants that Joshua conducted, between Israel and the LORD their God, before Joshua's death, that he inserted the record thereof "*in the book of the law of GOD.*" But if "*these words*" were written by him, who else is so likely to have written the previous chapters of the book? The often recurring phrase, "*unto this day*" (iv. 9; v. 9; vi. 25; vii. 26; viii. 28, 29; ix. 27; xiii. 13; xiv. 14; xv. 63; xvi. 10), certainly implies some considerable lapse of time, and has been regarded as disproving Joshua's authorship; but it does not necessarily imply a longer period than the interval between the conquest of Canaan and Joshua's last days (see xxiii. 1).

The Book of Joshua was written during the lifetime of Rahab (vi. 25); moreover, the "*we*" and the "*us*" of chapter v., *vv.* 1 and 6, attribute the authorship to one who had taken part in the crossing of the Jordan.

Supposing, then, that Joshua is himself the principal contributor, and, in the main, the author of the book, the studied avoidance of personal details suggests to us, moreover, something respecting his character. How noble is this absence of a spirit of egotism! Concent-

to the point, for there is no reason for supposing any connection between this village and the region so named in disdain by Hiram (1 Kings ix. 13). The antiquity of the Book of Joshua is marked by the last clause of chapter ix. 27.

tration on a great and grand object excludes the petty conceit that occupies small minds. As with Moses, so with Joshua, the glory of God, and the welfare of Israel are his all-absorbing thoughts.

But though in the Book of Joshua we shall find the works of the LORD recorded, and not the life of a man, we are not left without occasional notices of Joshua in the books of Moses. In several of the most significant passages in the history of Moses and the Israelites, we see Joshua occupying a position of singular prominence. Human greatness, even when it is the result of special Divine interposition, is yet no sudden creation. There have been preparatory processes which have been at work. It is only those who have been under a previous course of training, who can discharge the duties of high stations. In the court, and in the wilderness, Moses himself had been at school, and had thus learnt both to govern men and to hold communion with God. And so, in his turn, was it with Joshua. We see the providence of God both marking him out, and also qualifying him for the government of Israel.

Though he is called "Moses' minister," we must not think of him as Moses' menial, but rather as Moses' principal officer. There was none in all Israel who occupied a position of higher social rank. He was grandson of "*Elishama, the son of Ammihud, prince of the children of Ephraim*" (compare 1 Chron. vii. 26, 27, with Numb. vii. 48). He was himself a ruler in the tribe (Numb. xiii. 2, 8). He is twice described

as "one of Moses' *young men*," which has led some to conceive of him as of youthful age; but whereas, at the lowest computation, he was over forty years old at the time,* it is evident that the term denotes his office. Soldiers in attendance upon great men are frequently so described (Gen. xiv. 24; Judges ix. 54; 2 Sam. ii. 14; xviii. 15; &c.)

Each time we meet with Joshua we find him in the closest relation to Moses, and only second to Moses himself in dignity, and moreover, in circumstances that would materially bear upon his future position as the military leader and political head of the nation.

At his first appearance he is seen leading the chosen bands of Israel in their triumphant resistance of the Amalekites. Of his antecedents and his youth we know nothing. He comes before us at once in mature life, as Moses' deputed military representative. Thus early, in this his first victory over their enemies, was Joshua commanded to the good-will of the nation. Thus early was an earnest given of the success that should attend his captaincy. Thus early, too, did he learn that success was not from human might and skill, but that it was from above, from the LORD of armies. Most instructive is the lesson that was taught to Joshua, and is not less taught to us, of *the efficacy of effort and prayer combined*, as illustrated by the drawn

* For he died at the age of 110 years, having spent 40 years in the wilderness, and less than 30 years in Canaan.

swords of Joshua's warriors in the plain, and the uplifted hands of Moses on the hill (Exod. xvii. 8—13).

The next aspect of Joshua's preparatory course reveals him in a yet higher position than as the commander of the army. He is presented to our notice as the favoured companion of Moses, in those holy conferences that were granted with God. Alone of all Israel he was permitted to ascend Mount Sinai, when Moses went up to receive instructions as to the ceremonial law (Exod. xxiv. 13). And when the pillar of the cloud stood at the tabernacle door, and God spake with Moses, we are informed that Joshua "*departed not out of the tabernacle*" (Exod. xxxiii. 11 *).

It would appear that although present on these occasions, Joshua remained at some distance, and was not a party to the heavenly converse that passed betwixt Moses and his God, when the LORD spake with Moses face to face ; or, as these two holy men descended the mountain, and heard the sounds of revelry that filled the camp, Joshua would have known that the noise was *not a noise of war*, but that *Israel had corrupted themselves* (Exod. xxxii. 7). In his presence with Moses on these occasions, we are reminded of the favour shown to

* The last sentence in the verse is apparently retrospective, meaning that while the LORD spake with Moses, before Moses returned to the camp, Joshua had been permitted to be present. So Ainsworth understands it. "That is, 'Joshua departed not,' &c. This sense the Greek plainly yieldeth ; but the Hebrew is so understood by some, as if Joshua returned with Moses, and JEHOVAH departed not out of the tent."

the three disciples of JESUS who were permitted to accompany their LORD to the mount of Transfiguration, and to the garden of Gethsemane, there to see sights and to hear sounds, not granted even to the rest of the twelve. As they would be strengthened by the remembrance of these things, so may we be assured that the memory of the audible voice of a present God, speaking with Moses, would have a permanent, and a sanctifying effect upon Moses' minister.

Joshua is named as one of those who was jealous in Moses' behalf at the communication of the prophetic gift of Eldad and Medad (Numb. xi. 28). This is another instance of a parallel with the experience of the disciples of our LORD, who would have quenched the Spirit in the unattached exorcist (Luke ix. 49, 50). This lesson, presented in both Old and New Testament, is full of instruction ; but we may not now delay, as our present object is to trace the history of Joshua.

The next mention is on the memorable occasion of his being chosen to represent his tribe as one of the twelve spies. With Caleb, he followed the LORD fully, and brought a good report, and witnessed a bold confession, and sought to still the mutinous spirit of his unbelieving brethren (Numb. xiii., xiv.) It was on this occasion that Moses surnamed him Jehoshua,* prefixing the name of

* He is elsewhere named Hoshea (Deut. xxxii. 44), Jeshuah (Neh. viii. 17), and in the Septuagint and New Testament, "Jesus." On the double names of the Jews, and their import, see the author's pamphlet on the Genealogy of our LORD—"The Book of the Generation of JESUS CHRIST." (London : Haughton.)

God, “JAH,” to his name (Numb. xiii. 16). It was before “Oshea.” With Caleb he alone survived of all the generation of adults that had come out of Egypt (Numb. xxvi. 65). Here, again, we are tempted to dwell upon the lessons of the story of the spies; but we shall meet with the subject again in the course of our exposition, namely, when we come to the story of Caleb’s inheritance, and may then have a more suitable opportunity of doing so. Let it suffice us for the present to remark on the Divine wisdom that so ordered matters that one who was afterwards to lead Israel into Canaan, and to direct their military movements there, should have had this opportunity of becoming familiar with the country.

And now we reach the last point in the history of Joshua as given in the Pentateuch, namely, his nomination as Moses’ successor. Already he had been divinely recognized as the conservator of the tradition of perpetual enmity with Amalek (Exod. xvii. 14); but as the time draws nigh for Moses to die, the LORD expressly intimates that Joshua is to take the government of Israel, saying, “*Charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit this land*” (Deut. i. 38; iii. 28; xxxiv. 9).

Beautiful and affecting is the story of Joshua’s appointment. As Aaron has died by the hand of the LORD, so Moses too must die. The cherished desire and hope of all his life may not be granted. He shall

see the good land, but he may not enter thither. He is bidden to get him up into Mount Abarim, there to be gathered to his people. What is his first utterance? Does he bewail his bitter disappointment? Does he tender some request for his own family? He had, indeed, asked that he might "*go over, and see the good land beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon*" (Deut. iii. 23—25); but his predominating thought is for Israel and their spiritual needs.

"And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, 'Let the LORD, the GOD of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them; and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.' And the LORD said unto Moses, 'Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at His word shall they go out, and at His word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.' And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and

before all the congregation : And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses" (Numb. xxvii. 15—23).

Such a one was Joshua, the man of God's choice ; such were the circumstances of his appointment ; and such was the spirit of his master and predecessor Moses. We conclude our sketch of his history, which we have gathered from the books of Moses, with a valuable note, transcribed from Professor Cassel's Commentary on the Book of Judges, on the subordination of Joshua to and the quasi-identification of Joshua with Moses, even after Moses' death. We shall have occasion to refer to this remarkable feature in Joshua's personality in the next lecture.

"There arose not a prophet like unto Moses." That which Moses was could not repeat itself in any other person. Moses was clothed with the authority of *originat*ion and *legislat*ion. He had been the Father (Numb. xi. 12), the Priest (Exod. xxiv. 8), the sole Regent (Numb. xvi. 13), and Judge (Exod. xviii. 16), of his tribe. He transferred the priesthood from *himself* to Aaron (Exod. xxviii. 1) ; *he* selected those who assisted him in deciding minor law suits (Exod. xviii. 21 ; Numb. xi. 17). *He* took seventy men of the elders of the people to bear with him the burden of governing the tribe (Numb. xi. 16) ; *he* imparted of his own honour to Joshua, that the congregation of Israel might obey him (Numb. xxvii. 20). With the death of Moses the work of legislation is closed. After him Joshua exercises the authority of *government*

and *direction* he executes only *inherited* commands ; his task demands the energy of *obedience*.

Joshua, therefore, was only the reflection of a part of the power of Moses. Joshua was only a temporary continuator of the Mosaic authority, specially charged with the seizure of the land. He was but the executive arm of Moses for the conquest. His personality is inseparable from that of Moses. As Elijah's spirit does not wholly depart from the nation until Elisha's death, so the personal conduct and guidance of the people by Moses does not entirely cease until the death of Joshua. His activity expends itself in *continuing* the work of Moses. It moves entirely within the lines prescribed by Moses, and is impelled by his inviolable authority. Joshua's deeds are but the historic outgrowth of the spirit of Moses. The Book of Joshua is but the narrative of Joshua's obedience to the word of Moses. Whatever Joshua ordains is rendered sacred by an appeal to Moses. Even the division of the land is conducted according to this authority (xiii.—xv.) “*Every place have I given you, as I said unto Moses*,” is the language used (Josh. i. 3). “*Remember what Moses commanded you*,” says Joshua to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh (i. 13). The fact is brought out with peculiar emphasis in the following passages: “*Be strong and very courageous to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee : turn not from it to the right hand or to the left*” (i. 7). “*There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua read not*

before all the congregation of Israel" (viii. 35). "*As the LORD commanded Moses His servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses*" (xi. 15). The direct command of Moses operates on Joshua, who executes it; as iv. 10 clearly teaches, "*until everything was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua.*"

In this identification of Joshua with Moses, Joshua appears as a remarkable type of JESUS,* Who was made "*under the law*" (Gal. iv. 4); and was "*obedient to the law*" (Rom. v. 19; Phil. ii. 8): Who came *not to destroy the law but to fulfil* (Matt. v. 17); and *not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him* (John v. 30).

* Masius quaintly allegorizes on this relation of Joshua to Moses, and describes JESUS as also "*Moses' Minister*," quoting Rom. xv. 8 and Gal. iv. 5. He compares the barren and impassable wilderness through which Moses led the people about, unable to bring them into the promised inheritance, to the law, which he too freely characterises as "*harsh, burdensome, and fruitless*," a shadow of good things to come, and not the things themselves. (Heb. x. 1). The land of Canaan he explains to represent "*the sacred mysteries of our eternal inheritance*;" and "*who*," he asks, "*does not perceive that baptism is distinctly prefigured by the Jordan?*"



LECTURE II.

THE LORD'S ORDER TO HIS HOST ; OR, THE CAMPAIGN COMMENCED.

“Arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people.”

CHAPTER I. 2.



HAT a changeful scene is this life ! One goeth and another cometh. One soweth and another reapeth. Periods succeed periods. Generations pass away. Meanwhile the purposes of God are ever progressing to their fulfilment. The Book of Joshua opens at a moment of a great transition. A memorable era has reached its close ; and another, not less memorable, is about to begin. The wilderness, with its bitter, but salutary discipline, has at length been crossed ; and new and happier experiences await the Israelites. Moses, moreover, is dead, and Joshua stands before the congregation as his appointed successor.

The Book of Deuteronomy leaves him before the reader with the following description of his character and his authority:—" *Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses*" (Deut. xxxiv. 9). The book before us takes up his history from that point, and tells how Joshua was called to enter upon the active duties to which he had been divinely nominated.

In reference to the word of God that came to him, bidding him "*Arise, and go over this Jordan*" (i. 2), both commendation and blame have been accorded to Joshua by commentators. One class admires his patience in waiting for the heavenly summons; both for his own sake, that he might honour God by implicit obedience, not running before His orders; and "*for the people's sake, that they might not hesitate to follow one who had not moved a foot without the leading of God.*"* Others, on the contrary, quote this exhortation to Joshua, to point the lesson that in every quickening movement God Himself takes the initiative in rousing His people to action, as though "*without a sovereign and effectual interposition on the part of God,*" the best of men, Joshua himself included, would become remiss and dilatory.†

But good as each of these opposite reflections are in

* Calvin, Henry, and others.

† Thus Candlish on Gen. xxxv. 1. He also quotes Judg. v. 12; Song ii. 10. 11; Isa. lii. 1; lx. 1; Mic. ii. 10; Eph. v. 14.

themselves, neither of them can be proved to apply to Joshua, for there is no evidence of any interval between the close of the days of mourning for Moses and Joshua's removal of the camp from Abel Shittim to the plain of the Jordan, where it would appear that this Divine monition was communicated to him.

There is a marked unity of subject in the first chapter, all the topics gathering round the one that is first introduced, namely, **THE LORD'S ORDER TO HIS HOST** to go over Jordan.

In connection with this Order, we shall study consecutively the three sections of the chapter. We may, perhaps, entitle them respectively, thus—

I.—WHAT THE LORD SPAKE UNTO JOSHUA, OR—
The Issue of the Order (i. 1—9).

II.—WHAT JOSHUA COMMANDED THE PEOPLE, OR—
The Proclamation of the Order (i. 10—15).

III.—WHAT THE PEOPLE ANSWERED JOSHUA, OR—
The Acceptance of the Order (i. 16—18).

We begin by studying—

I.—WHAT THE LORD SPAKE UNTO JOSHUA; OR,
THE ISSUE OF THE ORDER.

We are not here informed how the mind of God was communicated to Joshua, whether in a dream by night, or in a vision by day; or by an intimation communicated with all the distinctness of an oral voice to his

inner sense, as Masius thinks ; or whether, as is perhaps more probable, the holy oracle was delivered through the intervention of Eleazar* the priest, before whom Joshua was to stand, and who was appointed to ask counsel for him.

Howsoever conveyed, the word of God to Joshua begins with the mention of the recent national bereavement : “ *Moses, my servant, is dead.*” The] greatest of men had been removed from the people whom He loved as a father, and for whom he had devoted all his interests and energies. And yet this is no announcement of a thing before unknown, for Joshua and all Israel knew well the mysterious purport of Moses’ solitary ascent of Pisgah, and had wept already for his death. Still less is this a call to renew the days of mourning, for God would not have His people swallowed up in overmuch sorrow. The reference to the death of “ *the servant of the LORD* ” is rather a call to life and action. Henry thus paraphrases : “ Because Moses is dead, therefore the work devolves upon thee as his successor, for hereunto thou wast appointed. Therefore there is need of thee to fill his place : be up and doing ! ” “ The removal of useful men,” he adds, “ should quicken the survivors to be so much the more diligent in doing good. Such and

* What is meant by the *Urim* of Numb. xxvii. 21, and elsewhere, is among the secrets of Scripture. Much criticism, and much conjecture have been employed in the inquiry, but nothing certain has been elicited on the subject.

such are dead, and we must die shortly, therefore let us work while it is day."

When one considers the position of Joshua, with all the burden of governing a people with whose waywardness he was only too familiar, a burden under which he had often seen the spirit even of a Moses fail—when one considers also the fierce conflicts which were sure to ensue, when he should lead Israel into the land possessed by seven warlike nations, one may, in some measure, enter into the awful responsibilities that he was now called to undertake; and yet here, in the word of God, there is sufficient to remove all diffidence from a man of faith. Never was a mightier task assigned to any man than to Joshua; and yet never did any man start forth better equipped than he, for observe, the LORD gives him (1) an express warrant; (2) glorious and gracious promises; (3) hearty encouragement; (4) clear directions.

1. He had an express warrant. For what could be more plain than the word of command—"Arise, and go over this Jordan." The LORD bids him reflect upon this his divine commission. No misgivings are to arise in his mind as to whether the enterprise is feasible, or whether it is justifiable. No responsibility on these heads rests with him. He is to regard himself simply as God's instrument for God's work. This question answers all questions—"Have not I commanded thee?" By a like question the Angel of the LORD dispelled the

hesitation of Gideon—" *Have not I sent thee?*" (Judg. vi. 14). The want of full authority is a source of weakness, but Joshua's warrant comes direct from the LORD of armies, who has set him at the head of Israel. Nor is the command less for the nation than for himself. They are to cross the Jordan too, and that in the express character of THE LORD's Host, sent out on His campaign. The terms of the order run thus—" *Thou, and all this people.*"

2. God also gives Joshua glorious and gracious promises, both for himself and for the nation thus united, and indeed identified in interest with him as their head. Already the land is named as their own. It was covenanted to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (i. 6. Compare Gen. xvii. 8; xxvi. 3; xxviii. 13). It was further pledged to Moses (i. 3. Compare Deut. xi. 22—25, etc). And now the promise is renewed to Joshua in the same words: " *Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you.*" What a thrill of hope must these words have caused in his breast! Thirty-eight years before he had traversed the good land. His eyes had seen its fruitful hills. Nor had the impression of the beauty and fertility of the scene left his memory. The same large boundaries that had been named both to Abraham, and to Moses, are repeated to him, namely, " *from the river Euphrates to the uttermost sea.*" How shall we understand these words? For they were not

fulfilled in Joshua's day, nor have they been hitherto. Shall we say that the language is that of oriental hyperbole? or that the description merely indicates, in a general way, certain well-known points that were to constitute the limits within which the land to be given to the Israelites would lie? Or shall we recognise a fulfilment of the promise in the fact that David and Solomon received the submission of the inhabitants of the regions thus bounded (2 Sam. viii. 3 ; 2 Chron. ix. 26)? Rather let us see here an example of a great promise that receives in successive ages larger and yet larger accomplishments until every part is fulfilled. "I will not deny," says Masius, "but that that wide sway of David and of Solomon constituted a sort of dim outline of the pattern of the ample inheritance that had been promised; but the true Israelites, and seed of faithful Abraham, will only then really obtain it, when CHRIST shall come to reign. On this, Ps. lxxii. dilates in terms which, though spoken in reference to Solomon and his kingdom, can correctly be applied to no other king than CHRIST."

The promise of victory, too, that had been made by Moses to the nation (Deut. vii. 24), is repeated to Joshua as its head: "*There shall no man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life.*"

Such is the double assurance: the inheritance is already their own; their enemies are already doomed to flee and fall before them.

But there is one part of the promise that exceeds, as

it includes, all other blessings—namely, the repeated promise of the continued presence and help of God. “*As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee*”* (i. 5). “*The LORD thy GOD is with thee whithersoever thou goest*” (i. 9). This is the close and climax of the whole charge.

In Egypt, God had been there to deliver; in the waste and howling wilderness, God had been there to sustain and guide; and in Canaan, God would be there also, amid bristling dangers, to give the victory. These words, “*I will be with thee, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; the LORD thy GOD is with thee whithersoever thou goest*,” had sustained Jacob at Bethel (Gen. xxviii. 15). He had found them true (Gen. xlvi. 15, 16). And still the God of Bethel would be with Jacob’s seed and Joshua their captain.

3. But two conditions are necessary. Grace does not supersede the need of graces. The covenant is in all things ordered and sure, and yet, humanly speaking, on the practice of two great fundamental virtues all depends. There must be *courage*, and there must be *obedience*.

Three times is the grace of *courage* enjoined (i. 6, 7, 9). Before this, Moses had been instructed by God to charge Joshua to “*be strong and of a good courage*.” (Deut. i. 38; iii. 22, 28; xxxi. 7, 8). The whole nation received a like charge, not only in

* For a full and beautiful commentary on these words, see a sermon by Spurgeon on Heb. xiii. 5.

reference to the Canaanites (Deut. vii. 18, 21; xxxi. 5, 6); but also in reference to all enemies against whom they might be led (Deut. xx. 1—4).

The precise force of the words so often repeated is this—“*Be strong, be very firm.*” In truth, this grace of hardy resolution is just that that makes the difference between a good character and one that is worthless. It stands next to faith in Peter’s list of necessary virtues (2 Pet. i. 5). It is this grace that enables a man to overcome the lusts of the flesh, the solicitations of the world, and the wiles of the devil. It was this grace that David charged Solomon to exercise (1 Chron. xxviii. 20). To this Paul stirred up Timothy (2 Tim. ii. 3; iv. 5). It is to this grace the same apostle encourages the churches: “*My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable. . . . stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong*” (1 Cor. xv. 58; xvi. 13). It is this holy courage that enables men to pursue their course in spite of both friends and foes. Courage says “No” to temptation, and “Yes” to duty. Courage means resolution to begin, and perseverance to continue. But, on the other hand, as one has said—

“ In what the world calls weakness lurks
The very strength of evil,
Full mightily it helps the works
Of our great foe, the devil.

“ Who seeks in weakness an excuse,
His sins will vanquish never ;
Unless he heart and mind renews,
He is deceived for ever.”

4. But, be it understood, the strength of mind that GOD bids Joshua put forth, is not mere hardihood. It is not a matter of nerve and animal spirits, but of faith and principle. The courage that Joshua is to exercise is to spring from a realization of the presence of GOD that has been promised him, and it is to impel him in the path of *obedience*. He is bidden to be strong and very courageous, *that he may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses, the LORD'S servant, had commanded him* (i. 7). He has no other sphere in which to move than that of the exact performance of his instructions, as written out for him and delivered to him by Moses. In the law that has been placed in his hands he will find a complete programme, and in the practical execution of this he will find happiness and blessing : *"then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and thou shalt have good success."* Any deviation from these his orders, whether in turning *to the right hand* (i. 7)—that is, to some plausible by-way that seems more merciful, more honourable, or otherwise better than GOD's way ; or in turning *to the left*—that is, to some easier, and more tempting detour—either form of disobedience will end in disaster and disgrace.

But if Joshua, although himself a prophet, is not to wait for new inspiration, but is to carry out a plan of action already revealed, he must become fully acquainted with the letter, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of this plan. A remembrance of the general outline will not suffice. The memory is fallible. Many an all-impor-

tant line becomes effaced from the minds of busy men, and imagination interpolates unauthorized variations of the original text. Therefore must Joshua continually study the best of oracles, the scripture of truth (i. 8). It must be in his mouth, the theme of his conversation ; it must be in his heart, the subject of his meditation, not only amid the engagements of the daytime, but also as on his pallet in the tent he lies wakeful in the watches of the night. Vainly will he hope to perform who does not ponder, and impossible that he should ponder who does not peruse, and that often, the book of the law.

Such was the tenor of what the Lord spake to Joshua. We proceed now to observe—

II.—WHAT JOSHUA COMMANDED THE PEOPLE ; OR, HIS PROCLAMATION OF THE LORD'S ORDER.

His obedience is *prompt and unquestioning*. No “*wherewith*” is interposed ; no sign is asked, as in Gideon's case (Judg. vi. 15, 17). He does not pause or procrastinate, but “*then*” (i. 10) and there, like a man of activity, he issues the order to the tribes through their officers,* bidding the people at once prepare them

* These officers or scribes (*shoterim*) are mentioned in Deut. xvi. 18. The scribes of our LORD's day were the continuators of this original order of men. Ainsworth in his note there says, “ Their work was to speak and proclaim unto the people what they ought to do (Deut. xx. 5—9 ; Josh. i. 10, 11 ; iii. 2, 3), and to see good order kept, laws executed, malefactors punished, and the like. Therefore they carried rods and weapons to execute justice, as *prætors* and *lictors* in the ancient Roman common-

victuals * for the journey ; yea, strong in faith, and full of the Holy Ghost, he announces that “*within three days*”† they are to cross the Jordan. Did he, then, expect the miracle that God afterwards promised to bring to pass (iii. 8)? It is sufficient for him that God has bidden them go forward. With the experience at the Red Sea in remembrance, he knows that God will not be at fault.

As Joshua’s obedience was prompt, so was it *thorough*. He will not do God’s work by halves, nor go to war without all the army. The two and a half tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh would have been content to have remained on the east side of Jordan, but the unity of Israel may not be broken. Those who would enjoy the promised rest must first bear the burden and

wealth ; and as sheriffs and constables in England.” In later Jewish times we find the Levites exercising like offices (See 2 Chron. xxxiv. 13 ; Neh. viii. 7).

* Great difficulty has been discovered in this mention of *victuals*, the fall of manna not having yet ceased. Some have supposed that the journey would leave no leisure to gather it. The word rendered “*victuals*” has been supposed by others to mean munitions of war, as though the collection of their goods was all that was intended. Others have gone so far as to understand the words to have a spiritual meaning—“ prepare your hearts, be found practising acceptable virtues, let your frame of mind be suitable to the occasion.” But whereas the manna was not the only food, though it was their principal diet, there is really no need of these far-fetched explanations (See Deut. ii. 6).

† Another rendering is, “*after three days* ;” but this makes no considerable difference in the time. We leave the question of the chronological adjustment of the events until we arrive at chap. iii. 2.

heat of the day, therefore Joshua calls them to the front, and reminds them of their pledge to Moses.

We shall, however, have occasion to say more upon these Transjordanic tribes when we reach the twenty-second chapter, we therefore now pass on to the last section of the narrative before us which tells of—

III.—WHAT THE PEOPLE ANSWERED JOSHUA ; OR, THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE LORD'S ORDER.

Here is one before the people, who as we have seen is in every way commended to the acceptance of the nation. He had been Moses' minister. He had, at the head of the army, led Israel against Amalek, and had prevailed ; He had accompanied Moses to the mount of God. There was none of all Israel of higher rank. He had already traversed the land of Canaan as one of the spies. In age he was more than twenty years older than the eldest of the people (Numb. xiv. 29), Caleb only excepted. He was full of the spirit of wisdom. He had been appointed by God, and formally ordained by Moses to be the shepherd of the Lord's flock, and the leader of the Lord's host. And now, after new intimations from heaven, he has issued his orders to the nation through the officers, the representatives of the tribes.

Was ever one called to an office, either better qualified, or more fully accredited ?

The officers,* uttering the mind of all Israel, in

* And not, as some have said, the two and a half tribes only.

reply to Joshua's commands, take an oath of fealty. They pledge themselves to do what he shall bid, and to go where he shall send, and in all respects to regard him as Moses' successor. As such they cheer him to his great undertaking; and even pronounce sentence of death upon any who shall not acknowledge his authority.

What could be more hopeful? The acclamations of man respond to the promises of God. Under such auspices does the career of Joshua begin; nor, as we shall see, was the continuation less prosperous than this its commencement.

The final words of the people are remarkable—“*Only be strong, and of good courage!*” They indicate that Joshua had rehearsed in their ears the charge that God had given him. The key to their import is found in the clause, “*Thou and all this people*” (i. 2). They recognize their union with their captain. Thus their exhortation may be regarded as an echo, and an acceptance of the call to effort and endurance. Its spirit is expressed in the words of a Christian poet, in reference to the Joshua of the New Testament—

“Only Thou our leader be,
Gladly will we follow Thee.”

APPLICATION.

It now remains for us to inquire what lessons we may learn for ourselves from the narrative of Joshua's entrance upon his duties.

1. There is great encouragement and full guidance here for all who, like Joshua, are called to occupy posts of authority, responsibility, or difficulty. Rulers, pastors, masters, teachers will benefit greatly by studying this chapter. It has been said that Joshua is a man of smaller calibre than Moses, both in natural and in spiritual character. I do not think that we are justified in any such depreciatory comparisons. But, even so, let us see in Joshua one led on to triumphs and successes that even Moses might not see. The question is not one of personal capacities or inherent qualifications so much as of God's choice and God's ever-present help. Has His providential leading assigned thee thy duties? Is He with thee? Is His Word thy daily study? Then "*Be strong, be very firm!*" He will make "*thy way prosperous, and thou shalt have good success.*"

2. The same consolation belongs to every Christian. We all have a warfare to accomplish, a Jordan to pass over, an inheritance to seek. The call of God, the promises of God, and the presence of God are our warrant. To the humblest saint the same word is spoken that was addressed to Joshua. Let us hold it fast amid the trials of life, and in the hour of death. "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" But, oh for grace to walk in the straight line of the holy law of God, swerving neither to the right hand nor to the left!

3. A deeper lesson remains, to which we have already alluded—a lesson respecting the office of JESUS. His very name is the key which unlocks the symbolism of his personality, for “Jesus” is but the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew name Joshua (Acts vii. 45 ; Heb. iv. 8). GOD’S SAVIOUR, or GOD THE SAVIOUR, is the meaning in either form (Matt. i. 21). JESUS CHRIST is the true Joshua. He is the Captain of the LORD’S Host.

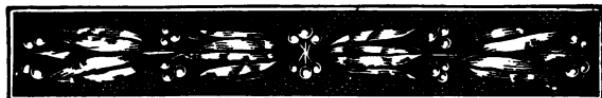
Moses in his person prefigured part of the work of CHRIST. He was the great prophet, lawgiver, and worker of miracles. He was the meek and contradicted ruler of Israel. In the perils of his infancy there was a similarity to the experience of JESUS ; but it was especially in his death and exclusion from the land of Canaan that his typical relation to the Redeemer appears (Compare Exod. xxxii. 32, and Ps. cvi. 23). God was displeased at him for Israel’s sake ; he stood in the breach, to turn away wrath from them. The sin of Moses that is mingled with this matter does not destroy its symbolical bearing. After this Moses could do no more. One man’s experience could not set forth the whole of CHRIST’s gracious work. Therefore, piece by piece the scheme of redemption is prefigured ; and one by one the saints and heroes of Scripture feebly anticipate the SAVIOUR’s offices. It was reserved for Joshua to continue the type begun in Moses.* We have seen †

* Thus Solomon continues the type of the kingly office of CHRIST begun in David, each setting forth separate aspects of the kingdom.

† See the quotation from Prof. Cassel, in the former lecture, p. 10.

that in Joshua's person Moses seems to live again. Thus Joshua is a type of JESUS risen from the dead, triumphing over all his enemies, and leading on the armies of the living GOD to victory. Shall we say of such a one, "We will not have have this Man to rule over us?" Fearful is the sentence upon those who thus speak (i. 18; compare Luke xix. 14, 27). Nay, but let us trust in Him. Let us follow Him. To Him let us tender our hearty and entire allegiance. With Him for the Captain of our salvation, let us not fear to cross the river and to fight the foe; and from Him, and with Him, we shall receive the purchased possession.





LECTURE III.

AN UNEXPECTED ALLY OF THE LORD'S HOST; OR, RAHAB AND HER FAITH.

“The **LORD** your **GOD**, He is **GOD** in Heaven above,
and in Earth beneath.”

CHAPTER II. 11.



HE question of the actual sequence of the events of the first three chapters of the Book of Joshua will come before us in our next lecture: meanwhile, let us premise that the second chapter, upon which we are now to enter, narrates matters that fall historically within the period comprised by the Book of Deuteronomy.

The sending of the spies was certainly previous to the removal of the camp from Abel-Shittim to the proximity of the Jordan, as that was certainly previous to the Divine and human confirmation of Joshua's captaincy that forms the subject of the first chapter.

This sending of the spies seems to have been one of the first acts of Joshua after his appointment. The matter occupied at least some four or five days; thus it must at the latest have been before the removal of the camp from Shittim, for the sojourn at the banks of the Jordan was but of three days' duration (i. 11; iii. 2).

But whereas the fords of Jordan were impassable at the time the Israelites crossed, and yet the men of Jericho pursued the spies there (ii. 7), it seems evident that they were sent some time before this, namely, before the death, or immediately after the death, of Moses.

The step was one which prudence would dictate. The promise of Divine help does not supersede the need of human precaution. "The condition of Joshua's provident care," says Bishop Hall, "was included in that assurance of success." He himself had been sent forth by Moses out of Kadesh-barnea forty years before, and the same divinely approved wisdom (compare Deut. i. 22 and Numb. xiii. 1) that suggested inquiry then, prompts him in turn to send out men to view the land. Not, however, now are twelve men to be sent, nor, as then, is the project published in the camp. This time there shall be no risk of a general panic through evil tidings. They are sent out "*secretly*," and their information is for his ear alone (ii. 1, 23).

Two "*young men*" (vi. 23) are chosen for this perilous errand; * either literally young in years, or

* It is scarcely worth while to mention the Rabbinical tradition that one of them was Caleb, the other Phinehas. The absurdity

they were so designated as being Joshua's military attendants (see Lecture I., p. 5). Jericho having been named especially as the place they should explore (ii. 1), they cross the Jordan, either by swimming the dangerous tide, or more probably by wading through at one of the fords, for it was there their pursuers thought to overtake them (ii. 7). Arriving at the city, they find their way to the house of Rahab. It may be said that they would reflect that in lodging with one who kept a common house for all comers, they would be more likely both to obtain information, and to escape observation than elsewhere; but it is more worthy of the occasion to say that the providence of God directed their steps. There are no accidents in the course of those whom He leads; nor was their choice of shelter accidental, for nowhere else in all the place would they have escaped with their lives.

Imaginative writers have pictured Rahab as attired in gaudy costume, going about the city with her harp (Isa. xxiii. 16), and at this very time in pursuit of her evil trade. Others, on the contrary, following Josephus, have adopted so charitable an estimate of her profession as to suppose her to have been simply a tavern keeper. May we not, perhaps, take a middle line, and venture to believe that one who had become a believer in the

of the story increases as it continues. It goes on to tell how Rahab hid only one—for the singular “*him*,” not “*them*,” occurs at ver. 4 in the original. The other, namely Phinehas, being a priest, and therefore an angel (Mal. ii. 7), could make himself invisible at will!

God of Israel had also, ere this, repented of, and forsaken the infamous life which her title, both in the Old and New Testaments, too plainly imports. She appears from the narrative to be supporting herself by her own industry, in the preparation, and dying of flax. One thing is certain, and that is that pure and saving faith cannot exist with foul and deadly sins.

We have not to seek for the lesson taught by the story of Rahab and the spies. The moral is already drawn for us in the New Testament. The central topic twice dwelt upon by the HOLY GHOST is RAHAB'S FAITH. In the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 31) it is written, "*By FAITH the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace ;*" and *the operation of this faith* is the topic brought out in the Epistle of James (Jam. ii. 25), "*Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way ?*" HER FAITH, then, is the centre around which we shall gather the instruction of her story, as given in the second chapter, and its sequel, as given in the sixth chapter.

In reference to Rahab's faith, observe first of all,

I.—THE WONDER OF ITS EXISTENCE.

Here is a believer in the true God, and a friend of His people—an eminent type, moreover, of the Gentile Church, which in the fulness of time should be united

with the commonwealth of Israel. But where is this piety found? In what place? Among what people? In what person? Had any one been seeking in those days for a bright example of living faith in the God of Israel, Jericho would have been the last place, and Rahab the last person to whom he would have come. Here is a wicked city, doomed to utter destruction because of the abominations with which it is defiled. In the outskirts, upon the ramparts, stands a house of ill-fame. It seems to be a very sink to which the foul waters gather. Here dwells an unfortunate woman. She has had no spiritual advantages—no Sabbaths, no Scriptures, no teachers—and yet in the base purlieus of a Jericho, in the heart of that poor harlot, like a fair pearl that lies within a rough shell among the weeds and rocks at the sea bottom, there is found precious faith, faith that finds utterance in the good confession, “*The LORD your GOD, He is GOD in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath!*”

Here is encouragement for those who are called, in the providence of God, to minister where worldliness and frivolity, and pride, and bitter opposition to the truth prevail. Even in places “*where Satan’s seat is,*” let not God’s servants fear failure; for “*the first shall be last, and the last first.*” Bunyan wrote according to facts when he described Christian and Faithful as winning over to their side some of the men of Vanity Fair by their wise behaviour, and their testimony.

Here, too, is encouragement for those who minister in

uncouth regions, where sin and ignorance seem to shut out hope of blessing. Let missionaries and visitors in alleys and courts, in attics and cellars, which seem like nests of blasphemy and impurity, take heart, and still speak of Jesus. The unholy atmosphere of gin palaces, and even of houses like that in which Joshua's spies sought refuge, cannot exclude the HOLY GHOST, or nullify the Gospel message. However contaminating the associations, they are not more so than those of residence in Jericho, and yet here the grace of God prevailed.

Here, too, is hope and consolation for the sons and daughters of misery themselves. If Rahab, the harlot, obtained the knowledge of God, and believed in Him, why may not sinners of the present day?

That we may appreciate the reality of the change that had been wrought in her, let us mark further—

II.—ITS PRACTICAL OPERATION.

A poetic faith may lift its possessor to the heavens in ecstacies. A talking faith may delight the hearers with glowing descriptions of supposed experiences and imaginary prospects. But the faith that saves is known by its works. Such a faith was Rahab's. Her faith wrought with her works, and by works was her faith made perfect. Acknowledging the God of Israel as the God of heaven and earth, she rests not in the bare acknowledgment, but she devotes herself to His service.

She espouses the cause of His people, and risks the fury of her fellow-citizens, rather than betray the emissaries of Joshua, who have sought shelter beneath her roof.

The story of her kindness to these two Israelites is soon told. Their entrance was made in the evening (ii. 2), but they had not escaped the vigilance of the sentry at the gate. Though the language of the land wherein their fathers had dwelt was doubtless retained amongst the Israelites, and though Joshua would select men for this mission who could speak it, their accent would certainly betray them to quick observers. Howsoever that may have been, their entrance is observed, and their purpose discovered; and information is carried to the palace of the king, who straightway sends officers to Rahab's house to apprehend them. Standing outside the door—for “in the East the privacy of the house of a female is respected,” says Kitto, “to a degree that might be called superstitious”—they call upon her to bring out the men that are come to her. With a presence of mind and an ingenuity that God had given her for the deliverance of His servants, she silently beckons her guests, who must have heard the summons of the king's officers, to follow her to the roof, where she quickly hides them amongst the stalks of flax,* that were either piled in bundles, or possibly

* This seems to be the true account of this thrilling incident, according to the data furnished. Others suppose that she had anticipated the king's inquiry, and had already hidden the spies.

spread out to dry in the sun. A notable providence was this, that the ripe flax had just been cut and gathered in, and was thus stacked or spread upon the roof.* Then, without loss of time, she comes forth to meet the officers, and with a feigned indifference, and a ready lie, diverts their suspicion. Her apparent eagerness in stirring them up to lose no time in the pursuit was as adroit as it was successful. The officers, first doubtless satisfying themselves by a hurried search that the men are not still there, hasten after them to their only likely exit, the fords of Jordan. In the silence of the night, Rahab visits them upon the roof, and, after a conversation to which we shall shortly recur, she lowers them by a cord, through a window that overhung the wall—another providential circumstance—and (having, no doubt, furnished them with a supply of provisions for the way), instructs them when, and where, and how to complete their escape, namely, by hiding amid the many caves and crannies of the mountains nigh at hand, and there remaining for three days.

Here two questions arise. What is to be said on the score of truthfulness? and what again on the score of patriotism? Did not Rahab by deceit and falsehood accomplish her kindness to the spies? And were not

* A comparison of v. 6 of this chapter with iii. 13; v. 10, 11; Exod. ix. 31; and 1 Chron. xii. 15, forms the subject of an ingenious, but inconclusive chapter, in Blunt's "Undesigned Coincidences." The date of the sending of the spies, and the duration of the period of the plagues, are not precisely ascertainable.

these men, moreover, the enemies of her city and nation? The utter destruction of all her countrymen was the avowed intention of Joshua, and it was to expedite this end that these, his emissaries, had been sent forth. How, then, shall the conduct of Rahab be justified herein?

As to the falsehood of Rahab in denying that she knew whence the spies had come, and in asserting that they had left her house, when they were still there, it is impossible to attempt to justify her course. That which is crooked, no casuistry can make straight. A lie is an abomination, and cannot be put in any light that can render it innocent. God's command is that men should speak the truth, and no supposed necessity can be stronger than His word. Where truth cannot be spoken, silence alone remains for those who will walk in God's ways. But how should Rahab, in her dark times, be judged by us with all our Gospel privileges? After all, it is not the imperfection of the manner of the performance that makes her conduct meritorious, but the spirit that prompted it. Her lies added no lustre to her act, but, so far, they detracted from it. They are neither commended nor excused in the Scripture that records them. It is her faith, and not her falsehood, for which she is set forth as a pattern to us.

As to the other question, her want of patriotism, let us reflect that loyalty to sin is treason against God. We might plead her cause by pointing out that the failure of the Israelites to effect an entrance into the

country would have been the perpetuation of the reign of Satan, and of every crime, so revolting is the picture of the moral degradation of the country that the Scripture hands down to us (Lev. xx. 23). But, in truth, Rahab was not left to infer what might, or might not be her proper course ; for she well knew that God had, in express terms, and by notable tokens, signified that the cause of the enlightened invaders was His cause ; and that they were His agents for the execution of His purpose. She knew what He had done to the Egyptians ; and to Og and Sihon on the east side of the Jordan (ii. 10) ; and that to resist the course of Omnipotence was as foolish as it was sinful. Clearly then, with this knowledge, patriotism was at an end, and conformity to the revealed will of God became the first duty.

It is only faith that can discern between the claims of God and man, and that can place God before all, and can obey Him as supreme, saying—“ *The LORD, He is GOD in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath.*” God give us grace ever thus to decide, when human obligations are found incompatible with God’s commands.

But let us now look at the matter in another light, and perceive, in reference to Rahab’s faith,

III.—ITS SAVING TENDENCY.

The characteristic of true faith is ever to tend toward salvation. Faith accepts the warnings of the Word of God as true, and leads men to flee from the

wrath to come. Now we shall find this to be a marked characteristic in the faith of Rahab. It inclines her to seek salvation both for herself and for her kindred.

Judging by appearances, who would have thought that, of all places, Jericho would have been taken? It was one of the cities such as the first spies had described as “great and walled up to heaven” (Deut. i. 28). When we consider the geographical position of Jericho, forming as it did the very key to the whole country, we may be sure that no pains had been spared to make it an impregnable fortress. Standing in a plain at the base of a range of impassable mountains, since called the Quarantine,* it was further protected by the swift torrent of the Jordan, which rushed down to the Dead Sea at some eight miles distance.

None of these defences, artificial and natural, deceived Rahab into a false confidence as to the safety of the city.

Then, again, the beauty of the scene was not less striking than the strength of the position. Jericho—whatever the exact site of the ancient city—was situated in a very fertile region. The climate there is almost tropical. It was called “*The City of Palm Trees*” (Deut. xxxiv. 3; 2 Chron. xxviii. 15; &c.). Being a large and important place, it may well be supposed to have been a scene of luxury and indulgence. But no delights of ease or pleasure beguile the anxious heart of Rahab. In the midst of seeming security, she

*As being the traditional scene of our Lord's forty days' temptation.

realizes the swift approaching doom of the city and its inhabitants.

Thus, as we look around us upon this world, this "City of Destruction" in which we dwell, let us not be deceived. It is an accursed Jericho. Let not its apparent stability calm our apprehension ; let not its fleeting pleasures divert our anxiety. Already the fire is kindled that is to consume the solid fabric of this earth. Though all look so strong and so fair, no stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down. All who have not found "*a true token*" (ii. 12) will be utterly undone in the terrible day of vengeance that is at hand.

But for whom does Rahab provide? Is it for herself alone? Nay, she only includes herself with all her father's house. She does not expressly mention herself at all, but pleads for father, mother, brethren, and sisters, and all that they have. This is the nature of true saving faith. It excludes selfishness. Faith in God and love to man go hand in hand. A genuine apprehension of danger will, to an awakened soul, bring thoughts of others also, and, first of all, for them of our own household. Here, then, is a lesson for us all. How would the kingdom of JESUS spread if each one who felt the importance of salvation would straightway seek the salvation of all his father's house!

Rahab's request is granted. The spies swear to protect her and her house : "Our life for yours." But four conditions are named ; and upon the observance of these depends the deliverance of the family—The visit of the

spies is not to be divulged—All her father's household must be brought into Rahab's house—None must go out of the doors into the street—The scarlet cord of deliverance, apparently the same by which she has let down the spies, must be fastened in the window.* In the dead of the night, as they stand outside the wall ready to depart, these four conditions are repeated—for precious life depends upon them—in a voice, we are sure so low than none beside Rahab herself might hear—or, even now, the spies will not escape. If in any point these conditions be broken, they will be quit of Rahab's oath (ii. 17—20).

Now mark the sign. What means the flaxen line of scarlet dye? Why not a blue, yellow, green, or purple cord? Why necessarily red? Shall we say that Rahab, who had flax upon her roof, had doubtless spun flaxen yarn, and had also dyed it with the scarlet, or crimson dye that was well-known to the ancients, and that probably no other colour was at hand? In fact, that it was a pure accident that cord of this colour was used on the occasion? But there are no accidents with God. This little detail was also surely providential and intentional. What then? Shall we say that scarlet is of all colours the most conspicuous at a

* A different term is used in describing the *cord* by which the spies were lowered and the *line* to be bound in the window. Hence it has been supposed that they were different. But the different use to which it was applied is sufficient to account for the variation in the name.

distance, and therefore best suited for a signal? This is also true; but the full reason, and the chief reason is deeper than either that has been assigned. There is a symbolical import in this colour which belongs to no other colour. Thus, for the cleansing of one who was ceremonially unclean, the Levitical law prescribed a red heifer (Numb. xix. 2). Why not a black, white, or tawny heifer? Evidently for the same reason that here only a scarlet line was to be bound in Rahab's window. In like manner scarlet wool was to be used in other ceremonies for purification (Lev. xiv. 4, 6; Numb. xix. 6; Heb. ix. 19).

The fact is, that the colour red is a constant symbol of blood (Isa. lxiii. 2; Nah. ii. 3; Zech. i. 8; Rev. vi. 4). When the sins of Israel are called "*red like crimson*," and "*scarlet*," the context explains the meaning thus—"your hands are full of **BLOOD**." (Isa. i. 15, 18.) In like manner, Babylon the great is said to be "*arrayed in scarlet*." The symbolism is explained, when she is further described as "*drunken with the BLOOD of the saints*" (Rev. xvii. 3, 4, 6).

This *sign of blood* is to be the sign of deliverance. It was so to Rahab, and it must be so to us also. Our windows must be bound with the scarlet line: our door-posts and lintels must be sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. In other words, the Name of JESUS, the merits of JESUS, and the death of JESUS, must be our only trust and our only plea, if we would be safe in the day of the LORD's wrath. The Blood of JESUS is, then,

that which Rahab's scarlet line prefigured. Believing in Him, and pleading His sacrifice and atonement, we shall be safe, and all our household with us.

But all the conditions must be observed. He who delays to enter the refuge provided, or who goes forth thence, can claim no deliverance. His blood will be upon his own head. Neither God Himself, nor God's ministers can be charged therewith. As Bishop Hall says—"If any one of the brethren of Rahab shall fly from this red flag, and rove about the city, and not contain himself under that roof which hid the spies, it is vain for him to tell the avengers that he is Rahab's brother. That title will not save him in the streets, within doors it will. . . . The church is that house of Rahab which is saved, when all Jericho shall perish."

In one point the type fails. Rahab was not to utter the business ; and the merciful deliverance was confined to one little company. But we, instead of keeping silence, are each one enjoined to cry aloud, and to invite all around to share the blessings of salvation. "*Let him that heareth say, 'Come!'*" We are to invite sinners of every degree, and with loving violence to compel them to come in.

The fourth and last consideration that this history brings before us, in reference to Rahab's faith, is—

IV.—ITS RICH REWARD.

Vain are man's promises of help except God approve

the pledge. The oath of the spies to deliver Rahab and her house had availed her nothing had not GOD Himself, by a notable miracle, confirmed their word. Joshua held himself bound by the covenant of his representatives; but what was more, the LORD accepted Rahab's faith and spared her house: or, when the walls of Jericho fell down, her house had fallen too, for it abutted on the wall. But it fell not, but stood unscathed amid the overthrow, a monument of Divine faithfulness and mercy. Nor will that faithfulness and mercy fail to save any, even the most unworthy, who has entered into the covenant of grace. "Our life for yours!" may every ambassador of the Gospel say. If the conditions of salvation be observed, thy house and thy hope shall stand, though a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand. "When, at the last," says Talmage, "our world shall be surrounded more terribly than was Jericho, even by the trumpet of the Judgment and the Resurrection; and when the walls and the rocks and the mountains shall fall they who have Rahab's faith shall have Rahab's deliverance."

Let us trace the remainder of Rahab's history. The walls of Jericho have fallen, the inhabitants have been put to death; and, by Joshua's orders, Rahab and all her kindred are spared, and are brought out of the burning city alive. But contemplate her now—a harlot and a Canaanite—doubly outcast. Her own people have been destroyed with the edge of the sword.

She is a stranger among strangers, and she sits, trembling and weeping, with all her father's house, outside the camp. They are left there as unclean (vi. 23). Who would not pity her forlorn condition? Were this the end of Rahab's history, a sadder tale could not be told. Sweet as is life, there are some lives that are more bitter than death, and such would have been her life were it not that there remains a bright sequel to her story.

At the date that the Book of Joshua was written (whether, as we think, principally by Joshua himself, or, as others are led to suppose, by Phinehas or one of the elders who survived him), Rahab was still alive, and dwelling among the children of Israel (vi. 25). Marvellous is the grace of God exhibited herein, that one, who was once an unhappy Jebusite, living in uncleanness, should be delivered from temporal ruin, and from eternal damnation, and admitted to the privileges of the commonwealth of Israel; and so to those holy ordinances which taught of the coming SAVIOUR of the world. On such wise does our God dispose His providences in behalf of the vessels of election.

But this is not all. Scripture tells us more of Rahab. Lifted from the lowest depths of degradation, she is set on high among God's people. She becomes a chosen and happy mother: nay, more, a princess, for she was the wife of Salmon, son of Naasson, who was now the leader of the royal house of Judah, and the leader of a

camp of Israel (Numb. ii. 3, 9). Thus Rahab became the ancestor, not only of the upright Boaz,* but also of the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself according to the flesh.

It is remarkable that all the female names that appear in the genealogy of our LORD represent those who are either strangers, sinners, or sorrowers. *Tamar* is a widow and a forgotten woman; *Ruth* also a widow and a Moabitess; *Bathsheba* is an adulteress and the widow of a Hittite; and among them appears *Rahab* the harlot, of the accursed seed of Canaan. In this incorporation of these women in the holy line of the MESSIAH, we may see in the Old Testament an anticipation of one of the sweetest revelations of the New, namely, that God loves and welcomes the afflicted and the vile who seek His face. The enemies of JESUS declared the most glorious of His attributes when in their scorn they said, “*This man receiveth sinners.*” It was to the weary and to the heavy laden that He said, “*Come unto Me.*” The outcasts and the sorrowful gathered weeping to His feet, and were not repelled. Already is this grace announced in the story of Rahab and her family, and of their reception into the family of God.

It is sometimes asked how it was that Rahab, a Canaanitish woman, and Ruth, a Moabitess, could be thus received into affinity with Israel. But the veto

* Probably she was not literally his mother, for, although at first sight she appears to be so described in the genealogies, there is reason to think that at this point some of the links of descent are omitted.

against mixed marriages, in their case, had no application. Each had avowed her faith in Israel's God, and had dedicated her life to the interests of God's people. It is against consorting with idolaters as such that the prohibition was directed. He is not a Jew which is one outwardly alone ; nor, on the other hand, is she a heathen who, although of Gentile blood, is by faith a daughter of Abraham. None can ever say, I am disqualified from acceptance. Let Rahab's story silence every doubt and overpower every discouragement. "*He that confesseth his sins and forsaketh them shall find mercy.*"

Let us close this study by wondering at the sovereign grace of God that could select such a one, from such a quarter, to make her the honoured instrument of the deliverance, first of His servants, Joshua's spies ; and then of the parents that gave her birth, and of all her kindred ; that promoted her to high estate in Israel ; and that has made her memory fruitful in instruction to this day. Rahab is now among the redeemed above. Oh, that she may not in the judgment-day condemn us as having enjoyed a fuller light, and yet without her faith ! God bless us likewise, and accept us, and make us, as she was, a blessing to those around us. He is able, for "*He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill ; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people*" (Ps. cxiii. 7, 8).



LECTURE IV.

THE ENTRANCE OF THE LORD'S HOST INTO CANAAN ; OR, THE PASSAGE ACROSS THE JORDAN.

“And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the *LORD* stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.”

CHAPTER III. 17.



HE spies returned to Joshua with a good report, that had the ring of that true metal of which Joshua himself and Caleb had, thirty-eight years before, shewn themselves, alone of Moses' twelve spies, to be cast. “*Truly*,” said they, “*the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land ; for even all the inhabitants of the country do melt (margin) because of us.*” Their words were a quotation of Rahab's to them (ii. 11), as her words were an unconscious echo of the language of the prophetic song of Moses and the children of Israel upon the Red Sea shore (Exod. xv. 14, 15).

Their mission we suppose to have taken place immediately after Joshua's appointment as Moses' successor, and probably before Moses' own death. Their testimony sheds a gleam of gladness amid the sorrow of the days of mourning for the departed lawgiver. Already, hope, like a rainbow, seems to span the horizon, amid the rain-drops of a nation's tears. Already, the gloom of the wilderness sojourn seems to grow bright, in the near prospect of the possession of the land flowing with milk and honey.

The days of mourning at length over,* “*Joshua*,” with his wonted promptness and activity (vi. 12; vii. 16; viii. 10), “*rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel.*” It is while they lodge here, with the river full in view, that Joshua receives the Divine order, “*Arise, go over this Jordan,† thou and all this*

* It will be seen that the first verse of the third chapter is regarded as a continuation of the narrative at the point when it is left at the eighth verse of the thirty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy.

† Were the Israelites still at Shittim, at a day's march distant from the river, the words “*this Jordan*” would seem less appropriate. (See i. 11; iv. 22). The same phrase is used Gen. xxxii. 10. The exact sites of Mahanaim and Penuel, the points between which Jacob's journey lay, have not been ascertained, but they cannot have been far east of Jordan, for neither Gideon's nor David's host were capable of a long march when they reached these places after crossing the Jordan (Judg. viii. 4, 8; 2 Sam. xvii. 22, 24).

people,” together with the words of exhortation and promise that are recorded in the first chapter.

Upon receiving the *LORD*’s order to march, Joshua commissions the scribes to bid the people prepare themselves victuals, declaring that ere three days shall have past, the passage through the Jordan shall be effected. It has, with temerity, been said that Joshua miscalculated the time, when he prophesied that “*within three days*” the host of Israel should pass the river: but there is neither miscalculation nor mistake, either in Joshua, or in the book that records his inspired utterance. The error is with those who have assumed that the rhetorical order of narration must, necessarily, be the precise chronological order of events. The fact is, the “*three days*” of the first chapter (i. 11) fall within the “*three days*” of the third chapter (iii. 2). The statements harmonise; the prediction was fulfilled to the letter, as we shall see in the history of the third and fourth chapters.

The short time of waiting and of preparation is passed. Three days have elapsed from the time of their arrival at the vicinity of the river. Again the scribes are sent out to communicate to the people the order of the march. The priests bearing the ark are to go first, and then the people are confidently to follow. A space of two thousand cubits,*—namely, about three-quarters of a mile—is to intervene: for there must be no familiar approach to the august symbol of the presence of God. A reverent dis-

* A cubit was, as is estimated, 1.824 feet.

tance befits the dignity of the ark of God. The **LORD** is the defender of His people, not they of Him. No body guard need surround His priests whom He sends forth. There is, moreover, a practical reason for the distance between the people and the ark. It was only thus that it could be visible to any considerable number of the people as it descended before them to the water's edge.

The way was altogether new and unprecedented. Their fathers had trodden a like path when they passed through the Red Sea. Twice afterward were the waters of Jordan passed, namely, when Elijah and Elisha went through; and when, again, Elisha crossed alone (2 Kings ii. 8, 14), but heretofore no man had passed that way (iii. 4). Through such a way God alone could guide them, therefore His ark must be full in view.

Joshua's personal proclamation follows—

*“Sanctify yourselves; for to-morrow the **LORD** will do wonders among you.”*

Great emergencies are to be times of specially marked consecration. The prospect of an extraordinary interposition of God must not be met in an ordinary frame of mind as though it were a common thing. All Israel must practise abstinence from even lawful indulgences. There must be ceremonial ablutions, and, above all, repentance, humiliation, and fervent prayer (Exod. xix. 14, etc.) So is the eve to be spent of a day which shall be memorable while the world shall

last. Ere twenty-four hours shall have rolled round, the hand of the *LORD* shall be seen in mighty wonders in the midst of His people.

And now the day itself has come when the order of the *LORD* is to be obeyed, and His promise to be fulfilled. Summoning the children of Israel to draw near, “doubtless to the spot where the ark of God stood in the midst,”* Joshua bids them *hear the words of the LORD their GOD*—that is, of Him who claimed them for His people, and would undertake for them (iii. 3, 9; iv. 5, 23, 24; see also chap. xxiii). With such authority, and such love are the injunctions commended to acceptance. The Divine programme is part by part unfolded. The waters themselves are to follow out the plan, and at the touch of the soles of the feet of the priests they are to recede. So soon as faith shall put “*the LORD of all the earth*” to the proof by obedience, the very elements shall minister to the interests of His people. Down into the vacant trough of the river the priests are to go with their sacred burden, and there they are to stand upon dry land till all the host has crossed.

Three times in the course of that day we find the *LORD* reopening His communications with Joshua (iii. 7; iv. 1, 15), who obediently proclaims, stage by stage, the will of God, whether it be to the priests, or to the

* “*Erat enim solemne, cœtus ad tabernaculum convocare; ut nihil, nisi Deo veluti spectante, et conscientia, agi cum populo existimaretur.*”—MASIUS.

twelve representatives of the tribes, who were to be, as it were, God's witnesses in behalf of the nation, and, as we shall see, to set up memorials in stone as their affidavits of His hand. Thus is it seen, from first to last, that this great work is under the direction and control of God.

As was prescribed, so is all performed. The priests, the people, yes, and the inanimate river itself, obey precisely the Divine injunctions; and, lo! "*on the tenth day of the first month*," the month Nisan or Abib,* "*the children of Israel came up out of Jordan, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.*"

The passage through the Jordan may be said to have been a continuation of the passage through the Red Sea. The report of that great work had filled the earth with astonishment (ii. 10). Nor is this repetition of the miracle less marvellous. The triumphant progress of Israel should have been continued, had events taken their due course,—out from the bondage of Egypt, namely, from Rameses to Succoth—down into the impassable depths of the Red Sea, "*where the Egyptians essaying to follow them were drowned*"—on through the wild wastes of Arabia, and then straight forward across the parted Jordan into the land of promise. But unbelief and disobedience had broken this glorious series of stages, that else had followed in

* This month began with the new moon of our month of April; the Jews, however, say of March, but incorrectly, as Michaelis and others have shewn.

swift succession. The forty years during which they wearily traversed their own steps in the wilderness, until a whole generation had passed away, were not included in the original plan of procedure. But now that this penalty is paid, and the forty years are past, the nation resumes the glorious line of march, and the *Exodus* from Egypt through the sea is consummated in the *Eisodus*, or entrance into Canaan through the river.

Dr. Edersheim says, referring to the tenth day of the first month in Egypt (Exod. xii. 3), and its fortieth anniversary, when the memorial stones were set up in Gilgal (Josh. iv. 19),* “All between those two anniversaries seemed only as a grand historical parenthesis.” These two stupendous events are not only the subjects of ever-recurring admiration in Scripture, but are, moreover, frequently connected together, as though the latter was but the completion of the former. Thus Moses, in celebrating the escape through the Red Sea, sings of a second passing over of the people that is to take place amid the fear and dread of the inhabitants of Canaan (Exod. xv. 16). The stones in Gilgal were to be a joint commemoration of both events, the latter being after the pattern of the former (iv. 23). The Psalmist unites the two in the apostrophe, “*What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? and thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?*” (Ps. cxiv. 3, 5; see also

* “*Israel in Canaan, under Joshua and the Judges.*”—Religious Tract Society.

Ps. lxxiv. 13, 15; lxxvii. 16; Isa. xlivi. 2; Hab. iii. 8, 10). Wondrous as, under any circumstances, this twice repeated reversal of the laws of Nature, and this subjection of the elements to Nature's God, for the interest of God's people, the wonder of the miracle of the drying up of Jordan is increased when we become aware of the conditions under which it occurred.

The Jordan has a remarkable peculiarity in the formation of its banks, that distinguishes it from all rivers in the world. It flows in a winding course through a valley of considerable depression, which at the section of the river with which we are at present concerned, namely, that which passes Jericho (now El Riha), takes the form of a long sunken plain, known at the present day as the *Ghor*. It was here the Israelites encamped three days before they crossed. The breadth of this plain in some places does not exceed six miles, but near to Jericho it is twelve miles across. The river itself has a double bank. Between the lower banks it flows in a rapid stream. It is the impetuosity of the current that has given the Jordan its name, which signifies "The Descender."* The distance between these lower banks varies from 80 to 150 feet. They are from 5 to 12 feet in depth. Above these lower banks, there are terraces on either side, between

* That this is the true etymology of the word seems evident from an incidental allusion in chap. iii. 16; where, the word used for the "coming down" of the waters is the same as the name of the river.—STANLEY'S "*Sinai and Palestine*," quoted in KIRRO'S *Cyclopædia*.

steep cliffs some 45 or 50 feet high.* These terraces are overgrown with a dense brushwood of laurestinus, oleander, willow and tamarisk, and also, further from the stream, with dwarf oaks, sycamores, and cedars. The breadth across, between these upper banks, is estimated to vary from 200 yards to half a mile. When the river is swollen with the rains and melting snows of spring, namely, during the months of March and April, the waters overflow the lower banks (Jer. xii. 5; xlix. 19). To the present day they flood the roots of the shrubs upon the terraces described; but there is reason to think that the river formerly rose to a considerably greater height than modern travellers have seen it rise; for in ancient times, when the country was more thickly wooded and more extensively cultivated than now, more snow and rain must have fallen. The channel of the river, too, is said to have deepened with the course of time.

At the time when the Israelites crossed, the river was at its highest, broadest, and strongest. For it is stated as one of the marked circumstances of the transaction, that it took place at harvest-time, “*when Jordan overfloweth all his banks*” (iii. 15; iv. 19). At such a time the river was impassable even at the fords, only such heroes as David’s men of might, “*swift*

* The frontispiece, a copy of a larger photograph taken on the spot, shews the double, or rather the triple banks. The transparent atmosphere of Palestine makes the highest of these appear much nearer than it really is.

as roes, and with faces like lions," could at this season dare to cross the stream (1 Chron. xii. 8, 15). To such a multitude as the Israelites, with their women and children, flocks and herds, and all their goods, without a miracle it would have been absolutely impossible.

The ark of God is brought down to the water's edge.* It is borne upon the staves overlaid with gold. It is enveloped in its wonted coverings, the tricoloured linen vail, the badger's skin, and over all the cloth of blue (Exod. xxvi. 31 ; Numb. iv. 5, 6). But, ere we proceed with the narrative, let us observe the peculiar sanctity that was ever attached to this sacred ark. It was the depository of the ten tables of stone upon which were written with the finger of God the Ten Commandments. Other holy memorials were treasured in the ark (Heb. ix. 4 ; Exod. xvi. 33, 34 ; Numb. xvii. 10 ; Deut. xxxi. 26) ; but apparently in some outer compartment (1 Kings viii. 9), where they would be accessible and visible to the sons of Aaron (Exod. xvi. 32). This ark was of shittim wood, overlaid with gold ; upon it was the mercy seat of pure gold,

* The variation between the language of iii. 8 and iii. 17 has led to many different surmises. In one place the *brink*, and in the other the *midst* of the river, is spoken of. Differing commentators have placed the priests on opposite banks. The Talmud tells how after the waters had returned, by a new miracle the ark bore its bearers through the waters in safety. But the language of ver. 8 is evidently elliptical. In a condensed form it anticipates the facts detailed in verses 15 and 17. The priests first reach the brink—then the waters retire—and after this the priests stand still in Jordan, namely, in the river bed.

and on this the two cherubim, one at either end ; both of pure beaten gold (Exod. xxv. 10—22). Between these symbolic figures, whatever may have been their precise form and import, God was wont to reveal His presence by the Shekinah, or glory cloud ; and even by an audible voice speaking to Moses (Exod. xxv. 22 ; Lev. xvi. 2 ; Numb. vii. 89 ; Judg. xx. 27 ; 1 Sam. iv. 4 ; Ps. lxxx. 1). Thus the ark was regarded as, in a very special manner, the token of God's presence. With solemn awe it was ever kept from public view, nor might unconsecrated hands touch it on pain of death (Numb. iv. 15, 20 ; 1 Sam. vi. 19 ; 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7). The language that is used in reference to the ark implies its intimate connection with the immediate presence of God among His people. In the history of the taking of Jericho, the priests who went before the ark are described as passing on "*before the LORD*" (vi. 8 ; see also iv. 13). When the ark went forward during the wilderness marches, the prayer had accompanied its movement : "*Rise up, LORD, and let Thine enemies be scattered !*" When it rested, "*Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel !*" (Numb. x. 35, 36). This was the one cheering thought in the dark days of the Judges, "*the ark of the covenant of GOD was there in those days*" (Judg. xx. 27). But when the ark of God was taken, the sad wail went forth, "*Ichabod ! the glory is departed from Israel.*" When David brought back the ark, amid a nation's joy, with poetic rapture, in his inspired song, he called upon the everlasting gates to open and receive

“*the King of glory*” (Ps. xxiv. 7). Similarly, at the solemn induction of the ark into the oracle, after the completion of the Temple, Solomon prays, “*Arise, O LORD GOD, into Thy resting place, Thou, and the ark of Thy strength*”* (2 Chron. vi. 41; see also ver. 18). In fact, the ark was the earthly token, as the pillar of the cloud was the heavenly token, of the presence of God among His people, and of His guiding providence. Not only did the pillar of the cloud go before them, but, following that sign in the heavens, the ark was borne in the van of the camp wheresoever the LORD led them (Numb. x. 33). The ark is indeed mentioned with the other holy things, which when reverently covered by the sons of Aaron (Numb. iv. 5), was entrusted to the charge and carriage of the Kohathites (Numb. iii. 31; iv. 15), whose place was in the midst of the tribes in the line of march (Numb. x. 21); but this their service in the case of the ark could only have been subsidiary; for the carriage of the ark was one of the offices that was especially entrusted to the priests, namely, to the sons of Aaron (Deut. xxxi. 9, 25; 1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Sam. xv. 24; 1 Kings ii. 26; 1 Chron. xv. 2; Josh. iii. 3; etc).

It was when this ark of God drew near that, as if awed by the immediate presence of “*the LORD of all the earth*” (iii. 11; Ps. cxiv. 7), that the foaming torrent stood still in its career, and then backward and backward retreated, until it had fled miles

* See also Ps. cxxxii., which seems to be composed by Solomon.

away, rising to a great mountain of solid water ; whose undulating outline and white crest could be seen, both by the Israelites, and by their enemies, all through that day, still surging higher and higher, hard by the city Adam,* by Zaretan, apparently between twenty and thirty miles away from where the Israelites were.

Below this point the waters rushed on down to the great salt sea, leaving their wonted channel bare, that all the host might pass over dry-shod.

40,000 warriors of the two and a half tribes are the first to follow the ark, and to cross the river, by Joshua's order, that it may be seen that they will not evade

* The words, "*very far from the city Adam*," should apparently be rendered "very far off" (from the Israelites, namely) "*at the city Adam*."

Another interpretation is that the mountain of waters extended between these two places as its limits. Calvin adopts this explanation.

Some have supposed "Edom" and "Zarepta" to be intended, and that the congealed heap of waters was visible from these extreme boundaries, south and north. The Vulgate substitutes "Edom" for "Adam." The Septuagint version strangely reads for Zarethan, "the district of Kirjath-jearim."

The coincidence of the name "Adam" with that of our first father has led ingenious writers to recognise a symbolical import, as though the rolling back of the flood of waters very far from Adam represented the removal of wrath very far from the sons of man, through the work of CHRIST; but if so, whom shall we suppose "Zaretan" to symbolise?

No trace of the city Adam is found; but the position of Zaretan is indicated in two or three passages. It is referred to in connection with Beth-shittah (Judg. vii. 22), identified by Robinson as Shetta. It is further described as near Beth-shean, now Beisan (1 Kings iv. 12), and Succoth, now Sakut (1 Kings vii. 46).

their pledge to Moses, to go armed before the **LORD** to war (Numb. xxxii. 27; Josh. i. 14). With anxious haste, lest ere Joshua's three days be passed—ere all have crossed, and the terrible waters return and engulf them, or exclude them, the people tread the unwonted way rank after rank in swift succession (iv. 10), in a file that, even if the formation of the banks had permitted an unbroken line, must have extended at least a mile in breadth. There are points at which to the present day the Arabs, with flocks and herds, continually pass over in the summer-time. Meanwhile the little band of priests still stand in the midst of the shingly bed, bearing the ark; nor, till the last and feeblest in all the line of march has reached the westward shore, do they quit their post; nor even then, for first must a monument of so great a miracle be set up. At the word of the **LORD**, the chosen men from every tribe bear from the river bed, in which the priests are yet standing, twelve stones, which they bear upon their shoulders to the encampment, at the place afterward called Gilgal (v. 9). These twelve stones Joshua erects as a permanent memorial of the great occasion (iv. 20—24). And other twelve stones, perhaps huge boulders, rolled together by the united strength of strong bands of Israelites, such as would be through generations conspicuous in the water, Joshua sets up in the midst of Jordan (iv. 9), where the priests still wearily, and yet patiently, amid the falling shades of evening, upbear the holy ark. And now the final

order issues from the Heavenly Captain of the LORD's host to His earthly representative; and Joshua commands the priests that they come up out of Jordan (iv. 15—17). The priests "*draw forth*" their feet from the moist river bottom to plant them on dry land (iv. 17, 18). Then, and not till then, does the arrested mass of waters return to its own nature, and sweeps with fury down to the sea.

Thus have we endeavoured to realize the scene, and have recognised in the passage of the Israelites across the Jordan an instance of as marked, and as marvellous interposition of Divine omnipotence as the Church of God has ever experienced.

Our subject is, however, by no means yet exhausted. There are important reflections to be made, there are deep spiritual lessons to be drawn. To these we shall recur in our next lecture.





LECTURE V.

THE DOUBLE MONUMENT OF THE PASSAGE OF THE LORD'S HOST ACROSS THE JORDAN.

“What mean these stones?”

CHAPTER IV. 21.



ANY fine allegories have been reared upon the foundation of the twenty-four stones that were placed, twelve in the river-bed, and twelve at the encampment in Gilgal (as the place was afterwards named). Some have spiritualized them as types of death and the resurrection; others, with less show of reason, have seen in them a representation of the prophets and apostles of the Old and New Testament dispensations. Venturing still further into the regions of fancy, a recent writer on the Book of Joshua, among several novel applications of the narrative, explains the memorial stones as meaning those texts of Scripture which have been found helpful

in the soul's deliverance, and which should ever after hold an honoured place in the Christian's memory.

In the present case, however (whatever refinements of this kind may find acceptance with those who have a taste for mystical developments), the chapter before us has sufficiently answered the question—“*What mean these stones?*”

They were to be a standing record of the passage of the Jordan. Thus whatever that event itself meant was perpetuated by the memorial. “Lest this miracle should pass away with themselves,” says Bishop Hall, “Joshua commands twelve stones to be taken out of the channel of Jordan, by twelve selected men from every tribe, which shall be pitched in Gilgal; and twelve other stones to be set in the midst of Jordan, that so both land and water might testify the miraculous way of Israel: while it should be said of the one, ‘these stones were fetched out of the pavement of Jordan;’ of the other, ‘there did the ark rest, whiles we walked dry-shod through the deeps of Jordan:’ of the one, ‘Jordan was once as dry as this Gilgal;’ of the other, ‘those waves which drown these stones had drowned us, if the power of the Almighty had not restrained them.’ Many a great work had God done for Israel, which was now forgotten. Joshua, therefore, will leave monuments of God’s mercy, that future ages might be both witnesses and applauders of the great works of God.”

Let us in thought visit the scene. Let us first at

Gilgal contemplate yon pile that Joshua has pitched at the Lord's express bidding, and which all Israel has helped to erect, for each tribe furnished a bearer. Then let us betake ourselves to the river, and note, through the dark and yet clear waters, twelve other stones set up there by Joshua's order, and doubtless also under divine direction, though this is not stated: and as we consider the double monument, let us repeat the ancient question,—“*What mean these stones?*”

They mean that the passage of the Israelites over Jordan is—

I. A REAL EVENT.

The history that records it is not an oriental poem, or a patriotic legend. It is not a fine conception of an impassioned imagination. It is not an exaggeration. We have before us a plain matter of actual history. The whole, and every part, took place just as the inspired description presents the circumstances. It is not the fashion with critics of the present day to contradict the miracles of the Bible in their broad extent, but rather to explain away the several features of the narrative until the miraculous element is eliminated. This detail is hyperbolical, that is a later interpolation. The supposed miracle is nothing but a natural phenomenon that was misunderstood through the ignorance of an unscientific age. The story may be founded on fact, but is not to be received as absolutely true.

The manna from heaven, for instance, say the doctors of this school, was, after all, nothing but a viscous exudation from the tamarisk, and is still eaten by the wandering Arab. The drying up of the Red Sea, again, was no more, they tell us, than an extraordinary ebb of the tide that the direction of the wind at the time facilitated ; and similarly the passage of the Jordan, though doubtless a kind Providence ordered physical circumstances so as to favour the fording of the stream by the Israelites, was probably really not in any sense miraculous.

“ There is a mythical colouring in what is said about the heaped-up water of the Jordan standing by Zaretan,” says a modern critic. But can we tolerate such a suggestion for a moment, namely, that even a single circumstance in the narrative is after all not fact but fiction ? If so, the integrity of the whole is marred. If this or that part of the story is mythical, then there is no evidence but that, on the same principle, the whole may be mythical too. And if one chapter of the Bible be found mythical, what is there in the whole book that will not melt away in the crucible of the ill-named “ *verifying* faculty.” The fatal doubt once admitted, like a devouring worm, will not mar one page of the book alone, but will bore its destructive way throughout the precious Bible until the whole volume falls to pieces, and no single saving doctrine or sweet promise is left that can be surely deciphered. Touch one of the miracles, though it were the least, and you have as it were drawn out a screw from the machinery,

and thereby ruined the working of the entire system. Cross out were it but one jot or one tittle of God's inspired Word, and you have cut the thread of the garment: a wide unravelling will soon be manifest. Remove some perplexing truth, and you have dislodged a stone from the foundation, and the whole edifice will ere long crumble into ruin.* Let all free handling of the Word of God, as though it were the faulty composition of fallible man, be regarded as treason against truth, incompatible with faith, and fatal to salvation.

Now if, in the great event before us, we are dealing with exaggerations and myths, how shall we understand Joshua's deliberate preparatory announcements as to the time and method of the transit? His plain words are free from poetry and metaphor. There is no alternative; if the miraculous features of the passage of the Jordan are mythical, the reported language of Joshua becomes a tissue of imposture; and Joshua himself is reduced to a mere legendary hero. And what shall we say to the writer's solemn appeal to the twelve stones, that to his own day were clearly seen where they were placed by Joshua in the river-bed as memorials of the great event (iv. 9).

If the crossing of the Jordan was merely an ordinary

* " 'Tis a dangerous thing to depart from the literal sense of what is historically related. If we take such a liberty, we may as well understand other historical passages after the same rate, and so bring the history, not only of CHRIST's suffering into a visionary and fantastical cross, but also of all the New Testament to a very nothing."—RICHARD GILPIN *on Matt. iv. 3.*

matter, or an imaginary matter, “ *What mean these stones?* ” They mean nothing, and the book that refers to them means nothing. Implicit confidence in the Scriptures as the very Word of God is at an end ; and this confidence broken, the sinner’s hope in CHRIST, and all the consolations of the Gospel are destroyed.

Rejecting, then, all “ broad,” “ liberal,” and “ advanced ” views that would reduce the dimensions of this notable miracle to those of a merely natural occurrence, or would falsify them as though of “ mythical colouring,” we avow our unwavering conviction that this history of God’s wondrous dealing in behalf of His people is as real and as certain, as it is great and glorious.

The stones set up in Jordan and at Gilgal commemorated—

II.—A SIGNIFICANT EVENT.

The scripture before us expressly points out that the miraculous passage of the Jordan was of the highest significance, and that in four ways :—

1. God was glorified.—He was herein exhibited as “ *the living GOD* ” (iii. 10), and “ *the LORD of all the earth* ” (iii. 11). It was not at Israel’s will, but at His word that the waters became a way. It was not because they were a mighty people, but because they were the LORD’s host (Exod. xv. 13). It was not when Joshua, the warrior chief, but when God’s priests bearing the symbol of His presence drew near, the

chasm opened straight across the swollen flood. It was a way by which neither the Israelites themselves nor any mortal foot had passed heretofore (iii. 4) : none else but God could make an open road like this.* To mark His hand, the exact date is fixed at a time when impossibility seems to contradict the promise. First, “*three days*” are named (i. 11), and then before the expiration of that period, more precisely it is defined, “*to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.*” † Thus before all the people of the earth, and in the eyes of Israel was “*the hand of the LORD*” made known “*that it is mighty*” (iv. 24).

2. Joshua, moreover, was magnified,—and shown to be Moses’ divinely-sanctioned successor (iii. 7). It was at the word of God, committed to Moses to deliver, that Israel had crossed the Red Sea, and now Joshua is similarly honoured as the privileged recipient of the secrets of God. To Him and to Him only does God divulge His plan, and His time: and, as God’s chosen interpreter and messenger, Joshua announces what God will do. In the fulfilment of a prophecy the prophet himself is confirmed in the eyes of all who have heard the prediction.‡ Joshua, then, shall not fail in this criterion.

* Compare the phrase, “*A new and living way*” (Heb. x. 20).

† Similarly the express prophecies of Moses, “*To-morrow, &c.,*” anticipate the rationalistic explanation that such visitations as are referred to are common in the land of Egypt (Exod. viii. 10, 23, 29; ix. 5; x. 4. See also 2 Kings, vii. 1).

‡ Deut. xviii. 22. Compare Jonah iv. 1—3.

3. The Israelites, furthermore, were assured.—So notable a miracle, wrought by the hand of God in their behalf at their entrance into Canaan, was a practical warrant of future help. He who could make the elements subserve their interests thereby pledged Himself to make human opposition yield before them, and that He would “*without fail drive out the Canaanites before them*” (iii. 10). After their experience of the wondrous march “*from Shittim unto Gilgal*,”—that most memorable stage of all their journeyings, to which the LORD many centuries after recalls the remembrance of the nation, in Micah’s prophecy (Mic. vi. 5),*—what further impossibility can arise? With the remembrance of the naked channel of Jordan, and the distant column of congealed waters far away by the city Adam, what cause of trepidation can remain? Is there a timid heart in all the camp? Let that fearful one go out from his tent, and look at yonder double memorial, one here on the shore at Gilgal, and another there under the pellucid wave; let him quiet his alarm by asking himself the question, “*What mean these stones?*”

4. Lastly, by this miracle their enemies were appalled,—namely, the inland Amorites, the immediate spectators; and the Canaanites, or coast tribes (Numb.

* This phrase presupposes the ellipse, “*and what I did for thee*,” and is only one among many such condensations of language when two familiar events are coupled together in a summary allusion. Compare Acts vii. 16, &c.

xiii. 30) in the distance, who heard the report (v. 1). The passage took place “*right against Jericho*” (iii. 16). Oh, portentous sight for the inhabitants of that fortress! They saw that their defence was departed from them, and that they had not to deal with man, but with the LORD of hosts, even with Him before whom Egypt had been humbled, the Amalekites and Midianites defeated, and the eastern Amorites more recently destroyed. The Jordan with its precipitous banks, and its rapid stream now swollen to its full height, might well have seemed to defy so ill-equipped invaders; but all in vain: the thing they feared (ii. 10) has come upon them. As with the Red Sea forty years before, so now with the river Jordan, its waters are dried up from before the children of Israel; and at the terrible portent *their heart melts, neither is there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel* (v. 1).

Important as was the passage of the Jordan, viewed in all these four aspects, let us remember for our own exceeding comfort that it is not an isolated event, but the memorial stones have their meaning not less to ourselves than to the first generation that beheld them. They tell of—

III.—A PATTERN EVENT.

It was with apparent reference to this event that God promised His people by the mouth of the prophet

Isaiah, “*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.*” In other words, He declared that what He had done for the Israel of former days He will still do for His spiritual Israel. The passage of the river Jordan was but a specimen of His mighty acts, and a warrant to all that believe of what He is able to do for them. Let us, then, claim the promise, and embrace the consolation that this history declares to us for ourselves. Have we not our wilderness retrospect of toils and troubles—yea, and of murmurings and rebellions? Have we not our mighty foes? our impassable barriers?—difficulties that, with our scanty resources, we cannot overcome, trials that far exceed our little strength? And what can we do in these “swellings of Jordan?” Here is an answer to our misgivings, “*The LORD will do wonders among you!*” It shall be with us as with the Israelites. In our behalf also, the water-springs shall be turned into dry ground (Isa. xlii. 15; Ps. cvii. 33). JESUS, at once our Joshua, “God’s Saviour,” commissioned of Him to bring us into rest (Heb. iv. 8); our holy ark, in Whose heart the law of God was hidden; and all the treasures of wisdom: in Whom the fulness of God dwelt bodily (Ps. xl. 8; Col. ii. 3, 9); and our great High Priest, the forerunner of His people (Heb. vi. 19), has bidden us go forward, and has Himself preceded us in the untrodden way; nor can the great waterfloods of temptation, persecution, or tribulation overwhelm us while He Himself

stands midway in the place of crossing. No deliverance is too great for Him to bring about; no adjustment of providence that may be needful for the comfort and safety of His people is beyond the control of "*the LORD of all the earth.*" Doubt it not, ye who have already experienced "*the hand of the LORD that it is mighty,*" but "*that He will without fail drive out*" all the enemies of your peace from before you, and that He will give you your promised inheritance. Glorify Him by more faith. Acknowledge that "*the living GOD is among you.*" And forget not the debt of gratitude and praise; but when He has helped you, set up your memorial stones, and tell your children that come after you how here He delivered you from danger, and how there He blessed you with favour; and how, both by the promises of His mouth and by the pledges of His hand, He has covenanted to you and to them that He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Last of all, let us remark that the passage of the Jordan, the memory of which was perpetuated by the setting up of a permanent memorial in the twenty-four stones, was—

IV.—A SYMBOLICAL EVENT.

It has always been so regarded by preachers and religious writers. With all the analogies that inspiration has sanctioned, we can hardly err in interpreting this great transaction as having a counterpart in the

spiritual experience of God's saints. Is the wilderness a type of this weary world? Is the warfare of Israel emblematic of the soul's conflicts? Do Moses and Joshua foreshadow the offices of CHRIST? If the drawing of these comparisons be in harmony with the teaching of the Word of God, surely we may produce the parallel lines yet further, and recognize in the wondrous entrance of Israel into Canaan an adumbration of *the believer's happy entrance into the kingdom of GOD*.

But that phrase, "the kingdom of God," has a double meaning; it may mean the kingdom of God on earth, or it may mean the kingdom of God in heaven; and thus, as we follow out the symbolical teaching of the event which we are now studying, we shall perceive that it divides itself into a like two-fold application.

1. On the one hand, we may regard the passage of the Jordan as a glorious and "*abundant entrance*" into the promised inheritance. After a weary march of forty years' duration through a dismal wilderness—a place where scorpions and serpents bred, where no man dwelt, and no water flowed, and no corn fields waved—after great wars with the southern Canaanites, the eastern Amorites, and the nomad Midianites, they now pass into a land of milk and honey, of fountains and brooks, and more, it is "*the land of the possession of the LORD*" (xxii. 19), the scene of His own peculiar presence and special favour (Deut. xi. 12).

Looking at the passage of the Jordan in this light, as the termination of trials and the admission to a blessed

rest, it is a beautiful type of the close of the toils and trials of earth, and the transit to the bliss of heaven. The death of the Christian, then, is that which the Jordan symbolises. The very appearance of this river favours the figure, for its waters have a peculiarly dark and uninviting appearance.* But the blacker waves of death shall not overwhelm the LORD's host. The terrors of hell, like the descending torrent of the river, shall retreat to a far distance while the ransomed of the LORD pass over (Isa. li. 10). JESUS Himself not only has passed before, but still He stands in the midst, and the swollen tide becomes an open way, a path of glory, a very gate of life to His redeemed.

2. On the other hand, looking at the passage of the Jordan, not so much as a sequel to the events recorded in the Pentateuch, but rather as a prelude to the events afterwards recorded in the books of Joshua and Judges, we shall be led to a second and equally important interpretation of the symbol, and shall regard it as illustrating, not only the triumphant close, but also the hopeful beginning of the believer's course, and **CONVERSION**, not **DEATH**, will be the aspect of Christian experience that we shall recognise.

Fitly, then, will the river Jordan represent the baptism of water, the SAVIOUR's appointed sign and accompaniment of admission to the visible company of

* RITTER'S "*Comparative Geography of Palestine*," vol. iii., p. 52.

His people.* Nor is the symbolism already accepted set aside, for if the Jordan is a type of death, it is through death, namely, the death of JESUS, that we enter upon the resurrection life of God's regenerate children (Col. ii. 12 ; iii. 1, 2).

Great are the difficulties and perils that oppose the young inquirer who, convinced of sin and won by the Gospel invitation, would cross over from the wilderness of this world to the portion of God's saints. Floods of ungodly men make him afraid ; yet, let him fear not ; for CHRIST is more than they all, and CHRIST is with him. Before the triumphant advance of faith, all opposition shall retire.

True, fierce conflicts await him on arriving at the other side : not undisturbed shall he feast upon the old corn of the land. Strong Canaanitish hosts, entrenched in fortresses of stone, and armed to the teeth, will mightily withstand him ; in other words, the raging lusts of the flesh will still molest him, and struggle for the mastery, and the devil will do his worst ; but Divine grace shall give the victory, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the soldier and servant of JESUS. The SPIRIT of the LORD shall lift up a standard, and the enemy shall be smitten. He who has begun the good work will accomplish all His promise to the letter (xxiii. 14).

* The language of 1 Cor. x. 2 suggests a like application of a like event.

APPLICATION.

Look at the history before us which way you will, and it speaks only comfort.

1. Are you yet in your sins? and do you long to experience the saving change of the new birth? But does a very torrent of difficulties seem to roll at their fullest height between you and the peace and pardon you long to enjoy? Do you seem shut off from the promise, and utterly unable to escape from the wilderness of unrest and sin? Go forward, and fear not. JESUS Himself calls you. He Himself accompanies you. Every hindrance will vanish if you obey His word. Pray for more faith, and as you approach you shall see, so to speak, that already the Jordan is dried up from before you. But hasten. The ark still tarries. The flood of destruction is a little while longer held back. The way is yet open. The Captain's word of command calls you to march forward. JESUS, our Joshua, cheers you on. Hasten across, or the opportunity may pass away.

2. Are you already amongst God's people? Have you anxieties, difficulties, obstructions, in your course of life? Do you cry dismayed, "All these things are against me?" He who opened a highway through the Jordan is also your helper. "*They that are for you are more than they that be against you.*" Be strong and of good courage, and you shall sing praises at the other side of every trial.

3. Is JESUS your hope, and do you nevertheless quail when you think of the hour of your departure hence, when you must leave all you love here below? Does the king of terrors affright you? Do you feel that the way is one you have never trodden yet, and do you shrink from this unwonted experience? No; not when you think of Jordan, parted on either side, the waters beneath running down to the Dead Sea, and the waters above retreating far away, while the ark of God stood in the midst. See His ministers uphold Him and His covenant of grace to view. Now, if the mere symbol of His presence had such efficacy, how much more when JESUS Himself says to you, "*Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. For I am the LORD thy GOD, the Holy One of Israel, thy SAVIOUR. I have loved thee. Fear not, for I am with thee*

 (Isa. xlivi. 1—5).



LECTURE VI.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE LORD'S HOST AT GILGAL; OR, A REVIVAL.

“And the **LORD** said unto Joshua, ‘This day have I rolled away the reproach of **Egypt** from off you.’”
CHAPTER V. 9.

“COULD we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er ;
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood
Should fright us from the shore.”



O sang the Christian poet Watts, and thus, in the popular language of religious sentiment, the river Jordan has ever been the symbol of the Christian's death. This usage is warranted by an inspired precedent. Holy Scripture compares the land of Canaan to, and at the same time contrasts it with, the “rest that remaineth for the people of God” (Heb. iv. 8, 9). The

fact, however, that Canaan was not at once a scene of repose, but rather of conflict, suggests, as was said in the former lecture, a second line of interpretation. It is ever thus in the perspective of revelation. When we have reached what seemed to be the terminus, we find ourselves at a new starting point. Long vistas stretch out before our wondering gaze, where we thought we had seen all. Were we studying the history of the Exodus, and of the experiences of the wilderness sojourn, the usual interpretation of the symbolism of the Jordan and the promised land would be suitable; but we must now, in thought, take our stand, not on Pisgah's heights, "where Moses stood," but at Gilgal, "where Joshua stood." As seen from this point of view, we recognise in Israel's position a counterpart of our own spiritual life, not hereafter in heaven, but here amid the discipline of earth.

Believing, in reference to Israel's history, that "*these things are an allegory*," that is, that the course of events was so providentially ordered as to anticipate and illustrate the experience of believers under the New Testament dispensation, we shall see the spiritual teaching beautifully continued in the story of the special consecration of the LORD's Host to God, and of their acceptance at Gilgal.

In the paragraph upon which we enter now, v. 2—13, we may say generally that we have an account of ISRAEL'S REVIVAL..

The *need*; the *tokens*; and the *blessedness* of this revival are set before us.

Its *need* appears in THE REPROACH OF EGYPT.

Its *tokens* are THE RESTORATION OF ORDINANCES.

Its *blessedness* consists in THE RETURN OF FAVOUR.

Let us first dwell upon the *need* of Israel's revival, as seen in—

I.—THE REPROACH OF EGYPT.

Like a dark shadow had that gloomy reproach overhung the nation ; like a heavy weight had it oppressed them. Until it should be rolled away it was impossible for them to lift up the head. Though they have now planted their feet upon the inheritance so ardently desired for many a year, no songs of triumph are heard, as when their fathers came forth from the Red Sea. Not now, as in that day, do the daughters of Israel go forth, like Miriam, with timbrels and with dances.

Let us recall the condition of Israel then ; and let us observe the different condition now. In the former case, the arm of the LORD is stretched forth for their deliverance. In the latter, they are under His chastening hand.

Was there ever a nation called to brighter prospects than Israel when brought forth from the bondage of Egypt? The very misery of their experience there was but as a dark background that set off by contrast their happy deliverance. Signs and wonders had attended

their suit to Pharaoh. The gods of Egypt had been humbled in their sight. They had come forth bedecked with jewels of silver and jewels of gold. The enemy pursued them, but only to perish with his horses and his captains in the Red Sea. In the wilderness, the pillar of the cloud leads them ; bread from heaven sustains them ; and the smitten rock, gushing forth with fresh springs, follows the bread. Amalek in vain seeks to drive them from God's gift of living water, and is discomfited before the sword of Joshua, and Moses' uplifted hands of faith and prayer. At Sinai they fulfil the token given unto Moses, "*Ye shall serve GOD upon this mountain*" (Exod. iii. 12). There they receive the holy law from His own mouth. There Moses receives all those ordinances of worship, in which he is to instruct them to anticipate the great scheme of redemption through CHRIST. Well might Moses call upon them to contemplate their privileges as above those of all other nations (Deut iv. 7, 8). Already in the desert are the giant clusters from Eshcol borne in the camp before their eyes, so fertile is the inheritance upon which they were immediately to have entered. Happy art thou, O Israel ! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the LORD ! How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel !

But, ah, how soon this early blessedness of Israel was blighted ! What desolation was brought about by unbelief ! While daily eating of manna from heaven ; while under the guidance of the pillar of the cloud ;

beneath the awful shadow of Sinai ; they set up the golden calf, and forgat the God of their salvation. Again and again they were warned of the wrath of God. The glory of God flashing forth from the cloud in anger (Exod. xvi. 10), or the temporary withdrawal of the cloud from the tabernacle (Numb. xii. 10), had indicated His displeasure. Again and again, in answer to Moses' intercession, He had forgiven them, and had still vouchsafed His presence. All in vain ! their murmurings and rebellions, their provocations and temptations, their whoredoms and disobedience were unabated. Ten times told they set themselves in opposition to God and to Moses. Their sin and unbelief reached the climax on the occasion of the return of the twelve spies. Then they went to the length of appointing a captain to lead them back to Egypt (Numb. xiv. 4 ; Neh. ix. 17). For this their despising of the pleasant land, and distrust of God, and disobedience to His word, He swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest (Numb. xiv. 23, 25, 30 ; Ps. xcv. 11 ; Josh. v. 6). “*Turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red Sea !*” Such was the order from the holy oracle. Not Canaan, but the wilderness was to be their destination : not the Jordan ; but they were to return to the starting point, even to the Red Sea. Forty years were to elapse between their leaving Egypt and their arrival in Canaan : a year for each of the days that the spies had been absent. Of all that generation, moreover, only Caleb and Joshua, and the little ones

that knew not betwixt good and evil, namely, all beneath the age of twenty years, were to be spared. The rest were to perish there in the wilderness.

Through Moses' intercession (Numb. xiv. 20), the **LORD**, "*in His manifold mercies, forsook them not in the wilderness; the pillar of the cloud departed not from them*" all the remainder of those forty years (Neh. ix. 19). Still He fed them, still He loved them; but the glory had in a manner departed.

A careless perusal might lead us to suppose that the Books of Exodus and Numbers presented us with a consecutive history of the events of the forty years in the wilderness. It is not so. We read of the beginning and of the end of that dismal epoch. The interval is passed by in ominous silence. It is a blank page. A painful hint, however, is given us of the spiritual darkness in which the nation was sunk, in an allusion to this period made by the prophet Amos. He tells how those forty years were spent in the worship of Moloch, Chiun, and Remphan, and how their shrines and images accompanied their journeyings through the wilderness (Amos v. 25, 26; see also Ezek. xx. 13). As a nation, Israel was still the people of God, still in the covenant, still blessed with glorious privileges and prospects (Numb. xxiii. 21). As individuals, again, there were godly men among them, whose spirits reached the heavenly Canaan, though their carcases fell in the wilderness: but, as a generation, they were "*a seed of evil doers; children in whom was no faith*"

(Isa. i. 4; Deut. xxxii. 20). As a generation they lay under the frown of God, had forfeited their claims in His covenant, and were bitterly experiencing His breach of promise. Such, then, was the relation of Israel to their God at this period. Calvin, by a strange but forcible figure, sets forth the contradictory aspects of Israel's position. He compares the excommunicated and yet still cherished nation to a son whose father with one hand smites and thrusts him away, while with the other he still detains him as unwilling to part with him.

Bearing in mind Israel's former exaltation in the eyes of their Egyptian oppressors, and their subsequent humiliation, we are not left in doubt as to what was "*the reproach of Egypt.*" While the Israelites are wandering unhoused, like a lost flock, in the waste wilderness, ever journeying and yet never reaching the promised land, still shut in, amid rugged rocks and sandy wilds, in a place where no man dwelt—the daughter of Egypt, recovering from her consternation, lifts again her proud head, and pointing in derision across the deep sea, where her king and all his host have been engulfed—"Aha!" quoth she, "Is this the end of thy triumphant Exodus? Where is now thy God? Thou also hast thy plagues, O Israel! Either the LORD is not able to bring thee into the land which He sware unto thee; or, perchance, He hateth thee, and hath for mischief brought thee out, to slay thee in the mountains, and to consume thee from the face of the earth. Dost thou fare better now than under Pharaoh's

tutelage? Aha, aha! So would we have it." (Exod. xxxii. 12; Numb. xiv. 13—16; Deut. ix. 28; Ezek. xx. 22). Other meanings have been attached to the phrase, "*the reproach of Egypt*." It would be tedious to mention the various explanations which have been put forth by different commentators. The usage of the mode of expression here employed confirms the view to which the consideration of the relations of these two nations to each other has led us. The similar phrase, "*the reproach of men*," is explained by the prophet Isaiah to mean "*their revilings*" (Isa. li. 7). Similarly, "*the reproach of the daughters of Syria*" is coupled with the *despising* by the daughters of the Philistines, in Ezekiel's prophecy (Ezek. xvi. 57). The prophet Zephaniah in like manner connects "*the reproach of Moab*" with "*the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached the LORD'S people*" (Zeph. ii. 8).

Smutting under the taunt of the heathen, which the frown of Divine displeasure, and the accusations of a guilty conscience seemed to confirm, how can Israel inherit the LORD's land, or fight the LORD's battles. While the LORD permits that reproach to be cast upon them, how can they find heart for His service. Outcasts cannot render the willing obedience of God's reconciled children, nor does He accept their works.

But see, the cloud is breaking! The dark tokens in which Egypt read Israel's reprobation are seen no more. Already, on the east of Jordan, God has granted victory

to their arms: and now the Jordan has been crossed, and, as the people of His right hand, they stand within the borders of Canaan.

Does He, then, love them still? Is the guilt of past transgressions cancelled?

The history before us tells how, at Gilgal, the covenant between God and Israel was, as it were, signed and sealed anew; and how "*the reproach of all the mighty people*" which had weighed them down lower than the grave was, once and for ever, rolled away.

Before, however, we proceed, let us pause to inquire whether Israel's condition, which we have been contemplating, has any analogy to our own experience.

Go Christian, search thy heart and see
If this be not thy history.
Hast thou not lost the ancient ways,
And left the love of former days?
And hath not sin brought sorrow down,
And earned thy heavenly Father's frown?
But canst thou tarry far away?
Wilt thou not plead, in this thy day—
'Return, my God, receive, revive,
Restore my soul; Thy SPIRIT give;
Heal my backslidings: shew Thy face,
Nor longer hide Thy smile of grace!'

There are many among us who have indeed left Egypt. To the questions, "Is the LORD among us, or not?—Are we His people?" they can humbly answer, "Yes;" for He has given them sure pledges of their interest in the everlasting covenant. And yet, if asked to give a reason of the hope that is in them, they would not be ready

The answer of faith can scarce find utterance amid the sins and shortcomings that compass them round, and testify against them. Their words, their tempers, their works, their experiences, all seem to give the lie to their Christian profession and to their hope. On the one hand, they plead the merits of their SAVIOUR as the ground of confidence. Surely while looking unto JESUS they cannot be lost ; and yet in His sure Word it stands written, “*If any man have not the SPIRIT of CHRIST, he is none of His ;*” and again, “*If any man be in CHRIST, he is a new creature ; old things have passed away ; behold, all things are become new ;*” and again, “*They that are CHRIST’S have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts*” (Rom. viii. 9 ; 2 Cor. v. 17 ; Gal. v. 24). These, and a hundred other texts, seem to point like arrows of death against their confidence.

The world of unbelievers, too, joins issue against them, and, discerning their failures and inconsistencies, derides their religion, calls them hypocrites, and prophesies their doom. This “*reproach of Egypt*,” lies heavy upon God’s saints who thus walk in darkness. Scripture teaches us, it is true, to cast away the fear of man, and false shame, and bids us lift our head in the day of persecution, and read herein a fair token of our God’s approval. This is one matter ; but to lie under a merited reproach ; to have given the enemies of God cause to blaspheme ; to be humbled by Him in the eyes of a scorning world ; and meanwhile to have no clear answer from heaven, no sweet assurance within our

bosom in the day of rebuke and blasphemy, this is bitterness indeed.

Such is the gloomy experience of too many of God's children, who then can only mourn with Moses, the man of God, in the beautiful and affecting prayer which sets forth the mournful condition of Israel at this crisis in their history—“*We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance. . . . Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days*” (Ps. xc.)!

That prayer of Moses was not indited in vain in Israel's behalf; nor shall we in vain plead for a like reviving.

The narrative goes on to tell of the *tokens* of Israel's revival, as seen in—

II.—THE RESTORATION OF ORDINANCES.

When God made His covenant with Abraham and his seed, He appointed the ordinance of circumcision as a token of the covenant, imposing the penalty of death upon its omission. In obedience to the Divine command, Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the male members of his household, and circumcised them (Gen. xvii.), and the rite was observed in after generations (Gen. xxxiv. 14, 15). During the bondage of

Egypt, it would appear that this, in common with many other religious observances, was neglected. But Moses was reminded of the omission by a solemn vision of judgment at the inn where he lodged on the way from Horeb to Egypt. "*The LORD met him, and sought to kill him.*" Taught to understand the import of the warning, Moses instructs his wife to conform to the appointment of God in the matter (Exod. iv. 24—26). We may be well assured that Moses' obedience to the Divine monition did not end with Zipporah's performance of the rite in the case of Moses' firstborn. Whether on this occasion, or, as some have thought, in the days of waiting before the giving of the law at Sinai, it appears that there was a general circumcision of the generation that came forth from Egypt (v. 5). During the remainder of the wilderness sojourn again the rite is neglected.

How shall we understand the omission of this distinguishing mark of the holy nation?* Shall we infer that God had enjoined its disuse, to mark His displeasure? Was it not rather that the people had placed themselves at a guilty distance from Him, and did not either dare or desire to seek a nearer approach to Him. It is not that God disowns or dismisses His children; but it is their sins that separate them from Him (Isa. lix. 2). It is ever the tendency of guilt to excommunicate the guilty (Gen. iii. 8). But now He

* Which, however, we find from Herodotus was adopted by the Egyptian priests, and by other ancient nations.

calls them to Him, and bids Joshua once more initiate them as the covenant people.*

The deep symbolic import of this rite of circumcision is perpetuated to us in the sacrament of baptism. Each ordinance is conformable to its own dispensation. The severity of the law, and the partial extension of its benefits, are set forth in the circumcision in the males: while the washing of water in baptism is a beautiful type of the benefits of the Gospel. But at bottom, the teaching of both ordinances is the same (Col. ii. 11—13).

* The terms in which the order is given, “*Make thee KNIVES OF FLINT, and circumcise the children of Israel again THE SECOND TIME,*” confirm the impression that the similar circumcision of Gershom may have been the inauguration of a general observance of the ordinance throughout the nation, and not merely a domestic incident in Moses’ family (Exod. iv. 25).

Masius regards the circumcision of Abraham’s household as *the first time* to which reference is made in this mention of *the second time*. “The entire people of God was represented in the single family of Abraham. On that one occasion, then (Gen. xvii. 23), there was a general circumcision of the people, when circumcision was appointed of God as a warrant and pledge of the promised possession of Canaan. The second general circumcision is this here performed by Joshua, when the inheritance, of which circumcision was the pledge, was actually conferred upon them.” Perhaps, however, after all, as Dr. Howard Crosby explains these words in his “*Expository Notes on the Book of Joshua,*” all that is meant is that, Israel having been originally a circumcised people, they are now “*a second time*” to be restored to this their former condition, and not that there had been before this a simultaneous circumcision of the whole nation, which was now to be repeated. With Bishop Wordsworth, he quotes Isa. xi. 11, in support of this view; but surely the second recovery there spoken of has reference to their first recovery, namely, out of Egypt, as the second exodus is spoken of at Jer. xvi. 14, 15.

Each is the token of the Lord's covenant with His people. Each represents the putting off of the filth of the flesh. Each is a mark of separation from the world. Each ordinance is in vain, unless it be accompanied by genuine repentance from sin, and circumcision of heart before God (Compare Rom. ii. 28; 1 Pet. iii. 21).

Would we experience a close and happy walk with God? He calls us to that consecration to His service—that renunciation of impurity—that separation from sinners, which were formerly typified by circumcision, and which are now typified by baptism. Let us cry unto Him for the operation of the HOLY SPIRIT, that we may indeed "*put off the body of the sins of the flesh.*" Yes: He calls us to this spiritual circumcision. It is not He Who is unwilling to receive us as sons, but we ourselves who stand aloof from Him. "*He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy.*"

The rite of circumcision renewed, the other great national ordinance is celebrated on its appointed day.

The Passover, too, had evidently fallen into disuse during the sojourn in the wilderness. Moses sadly chode with the Israelites on their irregularity, and neglect of the appointed sacrifices during this unhappy period (Deut. xii. 8—11). On the first anniversary of the appointment of the Passover, the LORD called upon the people to keep the Passover (Numb. ix). This was apparently at the time the tabernacle was completed, and was set up. From that time forth no

mention is made of its celebration. It has been said that this second observance was exceptional, and that it was only intended to be observed in Canaan (Exod. xii. 25; xiii. 5). This, however, is an incomplete account of the matter. It is true that there was no provision made for the annual celebration of this or any other of the great feasts in the wilderness. But, as we have seen, the prolonged sojourn in the wilderness was not contemplated when these feasts were appointed. No provision was made for that period. It was an anomaly altogether. Certainly, if the nation no longer continued the rite of circumcision, they could not partake of the Passover (Exod. xii. 48). Their own sons would have thereby polluted the ordinance. Now, however, that the ban is removed by the Divine call to renew the token of the Abrahamic covenant, it is as though that ancient word were repeated in their ears, "*Israel is my son, even my first-born.*" Now, then, may they keep the feast.

We may not tarry to dwell upon the details of the Passover feast. Suffice it to point out that this feast had a three-fold bearing at all times,* and on this occasion a four-fold bearing.

It commemorated a *past* event, a *present* event, and a *future* event. It looked back to the night of the Exodus; it recalled the *passing over* of the Israelites by the destroying angel, when the first-born of Egypt

* See EDERSHEIM: "*The Temple: its Ministry and Services.*"

were slain ; and the escape of Israel from the scene of their cruel servitude.

In the present case, the Passover was a commemoration of the completion of the Exodus in the recent passage of the Jordan. The hand of the LORD had been seen in wonders done among them. His promises, and their ardent aspirations had thus far been fulfilled. They now saw that "*good land flowing with milk and honey*," of which they had so often heard.

The Passover pointed, too, to the annual return of the harvest now come, and was a feast of thankful recognition of the goodness of God herein. It was kept in the month of *Abib*—that is, the month of *the sprouting ear*.

Once more, the Passover looked forward to a future event, namely, the sacrifice of the LAMB of GOD, the true Passover, the Redeemer of the world. Those who with enlightened eyes partook of the passover lamb, herein, though it were but through a glass darkly, saw the day of CHRIST, and seeing it were glad. In anticipation of His atoning work, they brought the blood of the sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle ; and through Him they were saved.

Let us, like these happy Israelites, "*keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*." No slain lamb is needed now. The true sacrifice has been offered for us. Oh, that we who mourn our sins and our shortcomings may realize that in Him, even by His death, our guilt is purged away ; and, feeding upon Him in our hearts by faith, may dwell in Him, and

He in us, and so strengthened and refreshed may live by Him (John vi. 56, 57) !

As the sacrament of baptism perpetuates and expands the teaching of the rite of circumcision, so that of the LOR'D's Supper repeats the lessons of the Passover. The Christian ordinance looks back, as the Jewish sacrifice looked forward, to the death of JESUS as our substitute. Since the fall of Adam, there has been but this one way of salvation. May we, amid our fuller privileges, and clearer light, approach the same GOD Whom Israel worshipped, confiding in the same atonement, and (at such intervals as a sanctified reason may prescribe, and as opportunity may offer) renew our covenant with Him in the breaking of bread, and the drinking of the cup of blessing. Our feast similarly commemorates the *past*, the *present*, and the *future* : for we herein shew forth an accomplished redemption, our own reconciliation thereby, and our participation in our SAVIOUR's love at the marriage feast above.

It remains for us now to speak of the *blessedness* of Israel's revival, as seen in—

III.—THE RETURN OF FAVOUR.

Many tokens of love are granted.

1. First, the LOR'D expressly declares to Joshua, as the head and representative of the nation, “ *This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.* ” Blessed assurance ! May such a word come to each

sorrowing, struggling believer, direct from heaven to the heart—"I am thy salvation: the scorn of the world, the accusations of Satan, the rebukes of conscience—I have rolled them all away. Thou art mine, and I am thy God. I will undertake for thee." This assurance dries the mourner's tears (Isa. xxv. 8). Such was the word Joshua was commissioned to deliver to Israel; and such is the Gospel message now to every soul that with sincere repentance waits upon the LORD.

The name "Gilgal" commemorates the site of this word of heavenly reassurance. Moses had prophesied of the mountains to which Israel should be brought, "*on the other side the Jordan, in the champaign over against Gilgal*" (Deut. xi. 30). But where should Gilgal be found—the *place of rolling away*? Surely it must be here,* where the nation is consecrated as the LORD's Host, and accepted of Him, after their long disgrace; for here the reproach of Egypt is rolled away—

* This, which we have given, seems the true explanation of the mention of the name of Gilgal by Moses. Thus Josiah, thus Cyrus, were prophesied of by name before their time. Others suppose that the name was already given to the knoll in question, but that, as in the case of Bethel (Gen. xxxv. 15), it received a new significance from the occasion.

A further difficulty remains in the explanation of Moses' prophecy, for Ebal and Gerizim are not very near to Gilgal. Some have supposed that a second Gilgal (now Jiljilia) is intended. But the designation is only generally given. Moses does not state that mounts Ebal and Gerizim are near to Gilgal, but simply that they are in the land of the west, the land where the Canaanites dwell, the land that lies beyond Gilgal. Then follows the particular definition, "*beside the oaks of Moreh*."

“ Wherefore, the name of the place is called Gilgal,” says the Scripture, *“ to this day.”*

Have we our Gilgal? Can we look back to some remembered place and period when, after we had crossed the river of deliverance, and become heirs of the kingdom, when still we groaned at the remembrance of our sins, and longed for a sweet and sure sense of pardon, until, at some Gospel preacher's cheering word, or in some chapter of the Bible, or in some gracious manifestation of love Divine, the SPIRIT testified to our spirit that we were the children of God? Oh, happy day! Oh, blessed spot where the reproach was rolled away!

2. Beside the answer of God to Joshua, a second gracious token was granted. The enemy was still as a stone. With blanched cheeks and palpitating hearts, the Canaanites looked on and saw the people all encamped at Gilgal.

Now, shall not Israel, with soldierly decision, seize on the opportunity, and ere they have recovered from their panic, strike a decisive blow, and so possess the land?

Such is not the LORD's order: but until the fourteenth day of the month, the men of war are shut up in their tents; and then, as though in a land of peace, during a full week, the Passover is kept throughout their families. Surely the Psalmist alludes to this passage in Israel's history in the twenty-third Psalm, where he says, *“ Thou preparest a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies.”*

But why do not the men of Jericho now sally forth and take them at a disadvantage, as Simeon and Levi fell upon the defenceless Shechemites? This was the hand of God. Had He not now restrained them, like an eagle on his quarry, the Canaanite had swooped upon Israel and rent him to pieces.

3. And now a third token for good is added. Was it not providentially ordered by a loving Father that Israel should be brought into the land at the time of harvest. As they left Egypt laden with wealth, so, on the fortieth anniversary of their Exodus, they find a wealthy land offering its rich produce for their sustenance, and, as virtual possessors of the soil,—doubtless after offering the first-fruits to the LORD on the 16th day of Nisan, according to the law (Lev. xxiii. 10—14),—they eat the fruit of the land, “*unleavened cakes and parched corn in the self-same day.*” Nor is it until now, on the 17th of Nisan, that the manna ceases.

Thus temporal supplies shall not fail those whom God accepts and approves: thus, also, spiritual provision shall never fail God’s people. With regard to the symbolical meaning of the exchange of the manna for the corn of the land, shall we say that the one represents the views of CHRIST presented under the dispensation of prophets, miracles, and angelic visitations; and the other the more ordinary, but not less gracious or less sustaining revelations of Him that we must gather in the written Word? Or, shall we see

in the despised, though divinely given, wilderness fare—the manna that Israel knew not (Deut. viii. 2), a type of those partial and often disparaging views of CHRIST that precede the passage of the soul into the enjoyment of the portion of God's saints? Or shall we rather think of the cessation of the earthly means of grace when we enter upon the fields above, rich with produce that we have not sown, and the joys which our God hath prepared for them that love Him?

4. The close of the chapter presents us with a fourth token of the return of favour to Israel, in the manifestation to Joshua of the great Angel of the Covenant, with His drawn sword lifted, not in vengeance against Israel, but against their foes. This was the promised ANGEL who should go before them and lead them to victory. On this vision of the heavenly CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST we shall discourse in our next lecture.

Meanwhile, let us pray that, if Israel's sins and Israel's sorrows are over, we may experience Israel's restoration. May the reproach of the world be silenced in the triumphs of Divine grace in us, and around us! “*Let the beauty of the LORD be upon us, and may He establish the work of our hands!*” May He meet us in His ordinances, and accept us! May He feed us with the corn of Canaan! and may JESUS, “*the Angel of the Covenant,*” reveal Himself as “*the Captain of our Salvation!*”



LECTURE VII.

THE HEAVENLY CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST; OR, THE VISION AT JERICHO.

“And Joshua went unto Him, and said unto Him, ‘Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?’ And He said, ‘Nay; but as Captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.’”

CHAPTER V. 13, 14.



THE doctrine of the Trinity is no New Testament novelty; but is the eternal truth of God revealed in the first page of Scripture, and consistently maintained by all the inspired writers. The very term that is employed in the great dictum that asserts the Divine unity, “*Hear, O Israel, the LORD thy GOD is ONE GOD*,” implies a *combined* and not an *absolute* unity. It is deliberately avoided by Jewish controversialists in their arguments against the Trinity, because it conveys an opposite meaning to the dreary

doctrine of Unitarianism. It only occurs in two other places in the Bible, and in neither of these with the sense of a solitary oneness.*. It is found in the primeval law of marriage, where the husband and the wife are declared to be *one* flesh (Gen. ii. 24). It is found again in the symbolical representation of the union of the houses of Israel by the two sticks that become *one* in the prophet's hand (Ezek. xxxvii. 19). It is evident that in both cases a complex personality is in question.

The LORD JESUS, and the HOLY SPIRIT have existed with the FATHER from all eternity—three Persons and One God. Though at the Day of Pentecost the HOLY SPIRIT was given in fuller measure, and by more palpable tokens, yet He was in the world from the beginning; and before this time, even as after, all sanctification of heart and life has been His work alone. Even so from Adam down to the last man, none can be pardoned or find salvation but through the atonement of JESUS, the Lamb slain, in the counsels of God, from before the foundation of the world. “*Before Abraham was*,” He says, “*I AM.*” “*He was in the beginning with GOD, and was GOD; all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.*” Previous to His coming in the weak-

* These remarks are borrowed from a valuable pamphlet by Dr. Mensor, who shows that the doctrine of the *absolute* Unity of the Godhead was not the faith of the earlier Rabbinical writers; but is a comparatively modern thesis adopted in opposition to Christianity.

ness of human flesh, He was pleased, as it were, to anticipate His incarnation, and to manifest Himself to certain men chosen to receive His gracious visits. All through the Scriptures we hear from time to time of "*the Angel of the Covenant.*" Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and the elders of Israel, the Israelites at Bochim, Gideon, Manoah and his wife, David, Isaiah, and others of the prophets, in their visions all saw the Angel of the *LORD*, who speaks as God, is spoken of as God, acts as God, and receives the worship of God. This "*Angel of His presence*" is none other than Jesus Himself.* We now read in the closing paragraph of the fifth chapter of this book, how He appeared to Joshua.

Observe—

I.—THE TIME OF THE VISION—as indicated in the opening words—

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked."

1. It was immediately after God had been publicly honoured, and sought in His ordinances. The people had just been consecrated anew by circumcision, the token of the covenant. The men of war that had come

* See the succinct argument extracted from GAUSSEN's Sermon, "*Gédeon devant L'Ange de l'Éternel*," appended to this volume. The doctrine of the Trinity is seen, among many other Old Testament Scriptures, in Isaiah lxiii., where we read of the "*HOLY SPIRIT*," ver. 10, 11, 14; "*the Angel of His presence*," ver. 9; and "*Our FATHER*," ver. 16. This after a three-fold mention of "*The LORD*" in ver. 7.

out of Egypt had died in the wilderness. The younger generation had now come forward to enlist themselves as the LORD's host. They then, as His accepted people, keep the Feast of the Passover. “*Them that honour Me, I will honour, saith the LORD.*” It was when Abraham had just circumcised his house, he lifted up his eyes, as Joshua now, to behold a vision of heavenly visitants (Gen. xvii. 26, 27 ; xviii. 1, 2). It was when young Solomon, with the elders of Israel, had publicly acknowledged and worshipped God with a thousand holocausts in Gibeah, “*the LORD appeared to him that night*” (2 Chron. i. 6, 7). Thus, no sooner is Israel symbolically sanctified and justified, and religion restored among them by the public acknowledgment of God in the observance of His long-neglected ordinances of circumcision and the Passover, than the LORD Himself “*now*” comes down to reveal Himself to Joshua.

Christian, wouldst thou see JESUS? then consecrate thyself anew to the service of thy God, and seek Him in the employment of the means of grace. Especially exercise faith in the Lamb of God, and feed upon the paschal sacrifice in thy heart by faith. Honour thy God by thy devotion, and He shall honour thee by revelations of His glory and His grace.

But note further—

2. The vision was immediately before the mighty campaign with the Canaanites. It was just at a time when an assurance of the Divine favour was especially

needed, and was especially precious, that Joshua, we read, was by Jericho. Was it by day or by night? What brought him to the walls of the enemy's city? Had he, like Nehemiah, gone out to survey the position, alone, under the cover of the darkness? Had he gone to ascertain by what approaches he might lead the host of Israel against the city? or had the LORD bidden him go thither, as Gideon, who, under express Divine direction, sallied forth by night with Phurah, his servant, to spy the host of Midian? Or was this not rather a spiritual strategy? did not Joshua go forth to plead with God for strength against yon Canaanitish bastions—even as Isaac went out into the field at even-tide to meditate before his eventful marriage, or as Jacob tarried behind when he sent on his company over the ford of the brook Jabbok, ere he advanced with them into the dangers that awaited him in his advance into the land of Canaan? The Scripture before us does not furnish information in reference to our surmises, either as to the precise hour, or as to the motives of Joshua's patrol.

There are those who have dared to designate this vision as "an aimless theophany, and apparently void of result;" but its importance at such a crisis cannot be over-estimated. The occasion forcibly recalls, and indeed repeats the experience of Moses, when called to enter upon his great mission. As Joshua now, so he then was summoned to head the nation in an effort to break a strong oppression. Every possible hindrance and

difficulty lay before Moses and before the nation. Then, by the vision of the burning bush, and by words of love and power, the **LORD** reassured the hesitating prophet ; giving him a warrant, moreover, wherewith to establish the confidence of Israel.

This is often the method of God's procedure.* When a great trial is at hand, great revelations of His glory ; transporting experiences of His presence are given in anticipation. It was thus with our Divine Master, the **LORD JESUS** Himself. Before His temptation, the heavens were opened to His view ; the **SPIRIT** descended upon Him in bodily shape ; the audible voice of the **FATHER** declared that **FATHER**'s love, relationship, and approval of Him. It was thus, again, that the disciples were strengthened to bear the trial to their faith in the betrayal, suffering, and death of **JESUS**. Before He set His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem, and announced that strange, unwelcome, and unintelligible doctrine that He must suffer and die on His arrival there, **JESUS** had on the Mount of Transfiguration revealed His Divine glory to the chosen three whom He had taken as His witnesses. But to return to **Joshua**,—With what confidence would he head the army, when he thought of the Almighty deliverer, unseen, but ever-present, marching in the van ! And with what joy and assurance would the anxious spirits of the legions of Israel be reanimated, as the news was spread from rank to rank, how He who had dwelt in

* Compare **Acts xviii. 9**, with **1 Cor. ii. 3**.

the bush had appeared again to Moses' successor; how He who had troubled Egypt would likewise trouble the Amorites. With what attention would the officers and heads of Israel gather round their honoured leader when, on his return from that interview with a present God, he summoned them to hear the wondrous tale.

Let us listen with them while he describes—

II.—THE ASPECT OF THE VISION.

“And, behold, there stood a Man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand: and Joshua went unto Him, and said unto Him, ‘Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?’”

Though we have used the word “Vision,” as perhaps the most convenient, let it not for a moment be supposed that this appearance of the Angel of the LORD was merely subjective. It was not a dream, or an imagination that passed within Joshua's own mind. On the contrary, it was an actual Being Who came, Who was seen, Who spoke, and Who declared His relation to Joshua and the people. His appearance was that of a man, but of such a Man that Joshua at once recognised Him as no other than the great Angel of the Covenant, and went unto Him, and addressed to Him as such the earnest question, “*Art Thou for us, or for our enemies?*”

Wanting, as appears to us, both in discernment and in reverence, is the criticism that can familiarly

descant upon this solemn interview between the earthly captain of the **LORD's** host and the mighty warrior Angel, describing Joshua as “probably taking the armed man before him for some Canaanitish chieftain, whom he accosts with dauntless soldierlike bearing, and challenges to give answer whether it be so, or whether he is of the camp of **Israel**.” But not so obscure was the aspect of the Angel. When that same Angel, as a man, wrestled with halting Jacob till the daybreak, did not Jacob recognize the heavenly adversary and plead for a blessing? Did he pray thus, thinking he was addressing some native **Amorite**? When Manoah and his wife asked this same Angel to declare His name, surely it was not because they took Him for some Philistine. Not less beside the mark is the suggestion that when the Son of **God**, with flaming sword, stood over against Joshua’s uplifted eyes of wonder, there could be any doubt as to His heavenly nature.

But wherefore that earnest inquiry, “*Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?*” The promise of the presence of this Angel of the **LORD** was given in reference to the entrance of **Israel** into Canaan, and was given in such full terms as already to have anticipated Joshua’s question. Were not these the words of the warrant, “*If thou shalt indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For Mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the*

Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites : and I will cut them off" (Exod. xxiii. 22, 23). And, lo ! the promised Angel now stands before Joshua. What room is there, then, for doubt or fear ? Quite recently, too, had God promised that no man should be able to stand before Joshua—that He would be with him all his days, and would never fail nor forsake him. Moreover, He had only just established Joshua's confidence by the assurance that the reproach of Egypt was now rolled away from off Israel. And yet after these repeated assurances, Joshua still asks, "*Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries ?*" Is there not something strange in this ?

Let us turn to the history of the promise of this Angel's guidance. A solemn warning was inserted in the midst thereof. "*Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not : for He will not pardon your transgressions, for My Name is in Him*" (Exod. xxiii. 21). After the sin of the golden calf, terrible threatenings were connected with that Angel's guidance, namely, that God would visit their sins upon them even in the land of promise) ; and that even though His Angel should bring them in thither, His presence and His favour should not accompany them (Exod. xxxii. 34; xxxiii. 2, 3). The intercession of Moses indeed prevailed. The LORD revealed to Moses Whom He would send with the people. Moses found grace in His sight. His presence and His gift of rest were promised. But can we wonder at Joshua's anxious inquiry ? Ah, even in these happy days of revival and favour, there was dis-

obedience and provocation enough (as chap. vii. too plainly shows) to bring a curse instead of a blessing.

In truth, Joshua's question is not the utterance of doubt and distrust, but rather of a hope and an expectation that crave a fuller confirmation. It is like the prayer of David, "*Say unto my soul, 'I am thy salvation.'*" Oh, it is a solemn thing to see the naked sword in the hand of the destroying angel standing over against us: a petition for a reassuring word from Him who wields that sword is no disgrace to a believer. A humble soul that is taught of God to know what sin is must oftentimes be conscious of sin and guilt enough to justify a prayer for a renewal of assurance, and to prompt the anxious question, "*Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?*" The parallel in Jacob's history, to which we have already alluded, is in harmony with this view of the subject. Jacob's situation is in many respects analogous to that of Joshua here. He, too, is leading the defenceless people of God into the heart of Canaan. These in Jacob's case are represented by his two wives, and his sons and their servants, and their cattle. He is leaving the land of strangers and idols. Obedient to the heavenly order, he is taking them to their covenanted possession. But Esau's armed hundreds await him. Just as Joshua had received encouragement, so the angels of God have cheered Jacob during his journey, namely, at Mahanaim. Already he has prayed for deliverance, pleading the Divine promise, "*Thou saidst, 'Surely I will do thee*

good.'" That night a mysterious Stranger meets him. His aspect is that of wrath and opposition : as One who, like Esau, was against Him, and Who would keep him out from his promised portion ; but, as Jacob wrestles still, he prevails with God, and clings to Him with whom at first he strove as against an adversary, and so receives a blessing, and herein a pledge of good success in reference to Esau's wrath. Death had seemed to threaten him, but, lo ! his life is preserved (Gen. xxxii. 24—30 ; compare Exod. iv. 24).

Thus here, the semblance of the heavenly Stranger is terrible ; but by faith Joshua goes to Him, and by faith takes hold upon His strength, and the seeming enemy is *now* found a friend. Grace has prevailed. Joshua, too, may say "Peniel!" for he has now seen the reconciled face of a once angry God, and his life is preserved ; for observe—

III.—THE COMMUNICATION OF THE VISION.

"And He said, 'Nay ; but as Captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, 'What saith my LORD unto His servant ?' And the Captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, 'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.' And Joshua did so."

Joshua's apprehension and alarm, natural as it was, reasonable as it was, was nevertheless graciously

set aside. The angel replies to each part of Joshua's double question. To the closing words, "*Art Thou for our adversaries?*" He promptly and unequivocally answers in the negative, "*Nay!*" To the question, "*Art Thou for us?*" He replies in the affirmative, "*As Captain of the LORD'S host am I now come.*" On both heads full satisfaction is granted to Joshua's anxiety. The gracious promises already given were not to be retracted. Israel had not been brought over Jordan to fall before the Canaanites. The sword of the destroying angel had not been drawn from its scabbard to smite the LORD's host,* but to smite the LORD's enemies. The angel has come to lead God's army on to victory.

Upon this gracious intimation, that the Angel of the LORD was now come to be the Captain of Israel, whom He designated as "God's own army," Joshua fell upon his face and worshipped. By this act he testified, not merely his reverence for the immediate presence of God, but also his faith in the implied promise. It was when Moses declared how God had met him in the mount, and by notable signs had attested His promise to deliver Israel from Egypt, that "*the people believed,*" and in token thereof, "*they bowed their heads and worshipped.*" By other references to Scripture, we might further show that to bow the head and worship is a gesture expressive rather of glad and grateful acknowledgment of God's faithfulness to His promise

* See note at the end of this Lecture.

than merely of reverence. (See Gen. xvii. 3, 17; xxiv. 26; Exod. iv. 31; xxxiv. 8; Lev. ix. 24; 1 Sam. i. 28; 1 Chron. xxix. 20; 2 Chron. xx. 18; xxix. 29, 30, &c.)

In humble adoration, Joshua professes his allegiance to Him Who has come to be the "*Leader and Commander of the people*" (Isa. lv. 4), and submissively inquires for His orders, saying, "*What saith my LORD unto His servant?*" The Angel accepts his adoration, and bids him loose his shoe from off his foot, for that the place was holiness.* Thus doth He by implication assert His own Divine nature, and, moreover, recall the like warrant of good will He had granted to Moses at the bush at Horeb.

Let us now briefly gather up—

THE LESSONS OF THE VISION.

The Angel was not God the FATHER, for no man hath seen His face at any time.

He was no created messenger. No angel may be worshipped, still less has any angel authority to charge the prostrate worshipper to assume an attitude of a yet deeper reverence. We have already in our introductory remarks avowed our belief that this was none other than the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The Story of the Vision, then, teaches us with what

* It is strange that some should say that it is from this statement that the name of Canaan, "the Holy Land," arose; for then is the wilderness of Sinai also "the Holy Land" (Exod. iii. 5).

feelings we should regard the revealed presence of EMMANUEL—GOD with us.

1. Let unsaved sinners read here a lesson of terror and alarm, and heed the call to repentance. His sword is in His hand. As Balaam saw Him in the narrow way (Numb. xxii. 22), as David saw Him at the threshing-floor of Araunah (1 Chron. xxi. 15, 16, 27, 30), and as Joshua saw Him, so still He stands ready to destroy the wicked. If they turn not, He will whet that glittering sword: His instruments of death are prepared: He will render vengeance to His enemies, and will reward them that hate Him (Deut. xxxii. 41; Ps. vii. 12, 13). What Christless soul is there that has not cause to tremble? Oh! unconverted sinners, as the first-born of Egypt, and as the host of Sennacherib were smitten by that sword of the destroying Angel, so will Jesus smite you with the sharp two-edged sword that He wields in His uplifted hand, and that turns every way to keep from the tree of life them that yet refuse His atoning work. But still, still His long-suffering mercy defers the stroke of judgment. Wilt thou not repent and believe the Gospel? “*Kiss the SON, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way. When His wrath is kindled, yea, but a little—Blessed are all they that trust in Him!*”

2. To those who have accepted His offer of grace, and who plead His precious blood as their title to pardon, there is nothing to dread in the person of their

SAVIOUR. They regard Him with feelings of love and confidence. Christians, you have sinned and fallen short. Yet fear not, JESUS is your surety. Your enemies are mighty; your difficulties are great; your dangers are manifold, but fear not! JESUS is the Captain of your salvation, and He is able to save to the uttermost. Do you belong to the LORD's host? Then bow your heads and worship, for as Captain of the LORD's host is He now come. Say, can you trust this Heavenly Guardian? Will you follow this Heavenly Guide? He claims these of us all—full confidence—entire obedience. Joshua's question of submission, “*What saith my LORD unto His servant?*” should be the language of each heart.

3. Note that while God's people are reassured and delivered from the fear that hath torment, there is a reverence and godly fear, from which they are not excused, but with which it is their duty to approach their Saviour. This is the symbolism of the loosing of the shoe. The right to tread freely where one will is implied by the girded foot. Awe and restraint, and recognition of another lord is implied when the foot is bared (Eccles. v. 1).*

* Those who explain the symbolism as representing the putting off of defilement, to wit, carnal and worldly thoughts and lusts, seem to forget that the figure would be inverted when the foot itself was planted amid the dust of the earth. Authority and possession are rather represented by the shoe (Deut. xxv. 9; Ruth iv. 7; Psa. lx. 8); also cheerful activity (2 Sam. xv. 30; Ezek. xxiv. 17).

There is too much irreverence abroad, even amongst God's people. It was formerly the accepted rule that high and holy topics should be touched upon with solemn tones and aspect, but nowadays the preacher who has the most "pulpit humour" is with many the most acceptable. A stiff formality of style is to be avoided by those who would win souls: and yet there is a snare on the other side. There is need to repeat the words of the Angel, "*Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy.*"

Cowper's words, in reference to this matter, express a sentiment which should not in our day be out of date—

" He that negotiates between Gon and man,
As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful
To court a grin, when you should woo a soul ;
To break a jest, when pity would inspire
Pathetic exhortation ; and to address
The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
When sent with God's commission to the heart.
So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip
Or merry turn in all he ever wrote.

• • • • • • •

No, he was serious in a serious cause,
And understood too well the weighty terms
That he had taken in charge. He would not stoop
To conquer those by jocular exploits,
Whom truth and soberness assailed in vain."

There is in Christian society too much lightness

prevalent in handling the Word of God. If a jest is needed, or if a speaker would be more smart than ordinarily in discourse, the holy book is too often resorted to, as though it were a repository of witticisms. Wherein, however, lies the point of the wit in thus introducing the language of Scripture? Is it not in its incongruity, we may even say in its blasphemy? Let us, in reference to this profane habit, say with David, "*My heart standeth in awe of Thy Word.*" Let us, with Joshua, loose the shoe from off the foot, for the place whereon we stand is holy.

4. A yet more serious form of irreverence is that of those who freely discuss the events of Scripture as though they were every day occurrences, and the doctrines of Scripture as though they were open questions. The scepticism of the day is not confined to confessed infidels and Free-thinkers, but has invaded the Church itself, and led to a toleration of which God is intolerant, and a breadth that is incompatible with CHRIST's strait and narrow gate, and a liberality that freely gives away what a faithful steward should jealously guard. The warnings of God are spoken of as "the austere denunciations of a narrow bigotry." The eternal wrath of God against sin is smoothed away into "Annihilation" or "Restitution." The Sovereignty of God is called "a sour Calvinistic theory." The miracles of Scripture are explained away. Irreverence prevails in the religious literature of the day. Irreverence finds

utterance from the pulpit, and from the professor's chair.. The divines of past days, who trembled at God's Word, are ridiculed for their "horror of anything approaching liberty in criticism," in other words, for their reverence. Listen, listen, Bible student, to the Angel's words—yea, to the words of CHRIST Himself, for it was He who said it—“*Put off thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy!*”

Reader, lift up the eye of faith. The Angel of the LORD stands now before thee. In His hand is the sword of death; but in His countenance, and in His lips there is only grace. Which is for thee—that sword of vengeance?—or that smile of love? Art thou one of the LORD's adversaries?—or dost thou belong to the LORD's host?

NOTE.—Many commentators regard “*the host of the LORD*” as being the angelic host, and understand the reply of the Angel as a declaration that as Prince of all the angels He was now before Joshua. There is much that might be urged in favour of this view. Several passages of Scripture describe the armies of heaven as in co-operation with God's people in their efforts. The meaning of the statement would thus be that legions of unseen helpers would now be led forth in behalf of Israel against the powers of darkness that were arrayed against them. Were we to adopt this interpretation, we should, perhaps, refer to the conflict of the heavenly host against Sisera (Judg. v. 20); certainly we should refer to “*the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees*,” when the LORD went before David against the Philistines (2 Sam. v. 24). We should, moreover, call to mind the horses and chariots of fire at Dothan, round about Elisha (2 Kings vi. 16, 17).

But we do not thus explain the words before us. The question Joshua had asked was not as to *who* the angel was, but *in whose behalf* his two-edged sword was drawn ; and whether, in the great conflict that lay before them, He would fight for Israel or not. Bearing Joshua's question in mind, I think we shall see that the negation with which his reply commences would thus be singularly inopportune, and that we shall not hesitate in identifying the LORD's host with the LORD's people Israel. They had crossed the Jordan on a great military enterprise against the LORD's enemies. What title, then, so appropriate as "THE LORD'S HOST."

As here, in contrast to the LORD's adversaries the Canaanites, they are so called ; so they are called "*the hosts*," or, "*host of the LORD*," in contrast to the Egyptians (Exod. xii. 41); in contrast to the Philistines (1 Sam. xvii. 26); and in contrast to the Ethiopians (2 Chron. xiv. 13).

It was not the first time they were so called. Allusion has been made to the experience of Jacob in his journey from Padan-Aram. At Mahanaim, as he thereafter named the spot, the angels of God met him. But what is the meaning of that name ? It signifies "Two armies." What two armies ? Surely the one in heaven, and the other on earth : the host of God above, and the host of God below: the angels Jacob met, and Jacob's own company (Gen. xxxii. 2).

There are, in fact, *three hosts* of the LORD. The *angels*; the *stars* of heaven ; and the *church* militant here on earth. The distinction some would draw between the singular, "host," and the plural, "hosts," assigning one meaning to the former and another to the latter, seems inconclusive. Will those who confidently affirm that the singular invariably denotes the angelic host affirm that such is the sense at 1 Chron. ix. 19 ? Is this the force of the singular number in the passage already referred to, 2 Chron. xiv. 13 ? See also Rev. xix. 14, 19, where the plural, "armies," and the singular, "army," are used interchangeably.

There is, thus, a beautiful comprehensiveness in the appellation of God so frequently employed in the later historical, and in the prophetical books of the Old Testament—"The LORD OF SABAOOTH, or, Hosts." He is the God of the angelic legions above ; and also of His weaker host below.



LECTURE VIII.

THE FIRST VICTORY OF THE LORD'S HOST; OR, THE FALL OF JERICHO.

“And it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.”

CHAPTER VI. 20.



ET us endeavour to realize the mingled feelings with which Joshua approaches the tabernacle in Gilgal, on his return from his reconnoitre at Jericho.* A solemn awe, and a holy joy pervade his breast when he thinks on the wondrous series of events that has commenced, and especially on the terrible and yet gracious revelation that has just been made to him.

* The writers who have recognized the identity of “the Angel” Whose appearance to Joshua is recorded at the close of the fifth chapter, and “the LORD” Who gives him directions for the taking of Jericho, are undoubtedly to a certain extent right, for this

And yet those solid walls that tower to the skies, those barred gates, those armed forces within the city constitute a hindrance such as only faith can dare to contemplate. How shall the army that has for forty years led a nomad life in the desert of Sinai cope with a foe thus entrenched? How can they conduct the siege? They have no engines of war, no appliances. With such mingled feelings of confidence in God, and yet

great Angel of the covenant can have been none other than the second person of the Trinity, the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself.

There seems, however, to be every reason for differing from these writers, when they go on to assert that the one narrative is a direct continuation of the other, and that the two are "very improperly separated" by the division of the chapters. The revelation on the first occasion is complete. The sublimity of the description is marred by the suggestion of a prolonged parley. In such immediate manifestations of the presence of Godhead, the words spoken are wont to be few. The impression left upon reading the record of the vision at Jericho is that the inspired historian has closed the scene where it is left in the fifth chapter. The sixth chapter opens with a statement of the state of feeling among the Canaanites (vi. 1). Joshua is now apparently once more in the camp at Gilgal, with the priests around him, to whom he communicates the divine instructions (vi. 6). There is nothing, moreover, to indicate a difference in the mode of his learning the LORD's will on this occasion to that employed on earlier and on later occasions. That these directions should be directly from the mouth of the Angel, and that those relative to the crossing of the Jordan (iii. 7), for instance, or to the detection of Achan (vii. 10), should be given by some other channel of revelation, does not seem probable. From the terms of Joshua's appointment, it would appear that he received intimations of God's will from Eleazar the priest, who asked counsel for him, "*after the judgment of Urim before the LORD*" (Numb. xxvii. 20). What this Urim may have been, the Word of God has not explained.

of realization of utter insufficiency in respect of all earthly resources, Joshua enters the sanctuary,* and stands before the priest. “*What saith my LORD unto His servant?*” was his question when the Angel of the LORD appeared to him; and such is still the attitude of his heart. “*Speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth.*” Whatever God says, Joshua is prepared to do. In such a spirit let us lay all our difficulties before the LORD, namely, in full realization of our need, and in full confidence that He is able to save unto the uttermost.

The LORD answers by assuring him that he goes to war against an enemy already, in His sovereign appointment, doomed and conquered. “*See, I have given into thy hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.*” Let the Christian who looks out on the impregnable strongholds of sin and Satan that obstruct his progress in the kingdom of God, by faith receive this word. The LORD prevents our fears and misgivings with promises. Ere His disciples come into collision with a wicked world, He says, “*Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*” The gates of hell shall not prevail against His host. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly. He is an enemy already conquered.

That we may be encouraged in our spiritual warfare; and that we may recognize the omnipotence of God in His wrath against sin, and in His grace towards His redeemed ones; let us study the wonderful

* We find Joshua “*before the ark of the LORD,*” and there receiving instructions in the next chapter (vii. 6—15).

chapter which we have now reached, which narrates
THE DESTRUCTION OF JERICHO.

Three Greek words may serve to epitomize its
contents—

- I.—The PROGRAMME.
- II.—The CATASTROPHE.
- III.—The ANATHEMA.

I.—THE PROGRAMME.

Very precise were the directions for the passing over Jordan. Even more particular are the instructions now given. The same ark of the covenant which had preceded them into the bed of the river is again to accompany their march. They are to go in a fixed order. The armed body that had been placed in the van on that former occasion, namely, the forty thousand warriors of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh (iv. 13) are still to observe that position; the seven priests are to follow bearing seven trumpets; the ark is now to continue the procession, which is to be concluded by the people, namely, the armed men of the other tribes.*

* Some have supposed that the whole nation that had crossed the Jordan surrounded Jericho day by day; but we need suppose no exception to the rules for military service laid down in the law of Moses. Indeed the supposition that the old and the young, the halt and the blind, followed the army round the city seven times in one day, and then joined in the slaughter of the inhabitants, would involve a new miracle that the Scripture does not claim. By comparing chapters vii. 3 and viii. 1, we see that “*the people*” are “*the people of war*.”

Thus arranged, they are day by day to go round the city, while not a word is spoken, nor a cry raised. In solemn silence they are to wait and wonder at God's strange work; but ever and anon throughout this mysterious march is to be heard the clang of the seven trumpets. When each day's circuit is completed they are to do no more; but they are quietly to return to their lodging in the camp.

Ere we proceed, let us pause to ask what mean these daily circuits; these symbolic sevens; this solemn silence; these trumpet blasts; and that great shout that at the last should be raised at Joshua's word.

1. The circuits of Israel around the city implied patient and persevering effort in God's prescribed way of working; they implied, too, a full survey of the position, and thus the recognition of their own utter inability to take the city by their own strength: but there is more implied than this. This daily journey round the city was, in a remarkable degree, a walk of faith. He who walks around a place thus openly and thus repeatedly, *thereby declares himself its possessor.** In prescribing this march round Jericho, the first city that Israel reaches, the LORD thereby seems to renew the promise already given to them, "*Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you*" (i. 3, compare vi. 2). Terrible to God's

* See what was said in the previous lecture on the symbolism of the *girded foot*, p. 115.

enemies was the import of these circuits, if they understood them. The Angel of the **LORD** encampeth round about, and walketh in the midst of them that fear Him to deliver them ; they are compassed about with songs of deliverance (Deut. xxiii. 14 ; 2 Kings vi. 17 ; Ps. xxxii. 7, 10 ; xxxiv. 7) ; but the great host of the **LORD** compasseth not the city of the wicked but for their destruction. For awhile, God's terrors may seem but an idle show, but in due time He will strike the blow. "*Our GOD will come and will not keep silence.*"

2. But what mean the seven-fold repetition of this routine, the seven circuits on the seventh day, the seven priests, and the seven trumpets ? We may partly answer the question by saying that in this seven times repeated march we have *a full and perfect test* applied. We may recognise here, as in many other places in Scripture, a regard to the evidential aspect of God's dealings. All possible charges against the reality of the facts shall be removed. Here, then, is the greatest possible deliberation. Both the Israelites and the Canaanites shall have the fullest opportunity of reviewing their relative positions. Both parties shall be convinced beyond all dispute that there are no natural means of carrying on the siege. If any marked result shall occur, it will be notably the hand of God. The strange routine repeated day by day is a public testimony to the Divine intervention.

Thus it was with Elijah's servant ; the six fruitless visits to the point of outlook marked the seventh as the time of the answer to the prophet's prayer, when the little cloud appeared in the far horizon. Thus, by seven times dipping in the Jordan, Naaman discovered that it was not the medicinal virtue of the water, but the goodness of God that removed his inveterate leprosy.

But the number seven not only implies a perfect trial : it is, moreover, a *sacred* number. It appears continually in religious ordinances (Lev. iv. 6, &c.). As the seventh day was the Sabbath-day, so the number seven calls our attention to God. These sevens, then, are like the seal of God, marking the whole procedure as of His appointment.*

3. The silence of Israel had its significance. God seemed to say to them at this time, "*BE STILL, and know that I am GOD : I will be exalted among the heathen.*" They could do nothing whatever to help themselves ; they could advise no plans : all they could do at present was to ponder and obey. Let us herein perceive that

* Writers who have treated of the symbolism of numbers see in the number seven the signature of the COVENANT ; the word "sheba" having both meanings (Gen. xxi. 31). *Three* is the signature of the Trinity, they say, and *Four* of the World (North, South, East, and West). Hence Seven, which is made up of Three and Four added together, implies the union of God and man. We confess to being unable to feel satisfied with this conjecture. Either *Three* or *Six* we should rather have fixed upon as the signature of the human family, than *Four* (Gen. i. 26, 31 ; x. 32 ; Matt. xiii. 33).

the silence and the patience of faith are, in their place, as efficacious as are words and deeds.

4. But while all Israel thus kept silence, the clarions of the priests rang through the plains, and echoed among the hills far away. They were heard by those that tarried in the camp at Gilgal. They were heard in every corner of Jericho. On the last day, from morning till the evening was drawing near, as round and round the city trod the weary footmen, the clear blasts of the seven cornets fell on every ear.

We shall, probably, not be wrong if we understand the import of these cornets as two-fold.* Blown only by God's representatives the priests, before the ark of the covenant, they are like the utterance of His own

* Much is said in Scripture of the use of trumpets. They appear to have been of two kinds—the straight silver trumpet, and the curved horn. The former was used for the summoning of assemblies, the leading forth of the camp, for sounding the alarm of war, and on festal occasions ; the latter is especially mentioned in connection with the proclamation of the new year, and of the year of jubilee. At the feast of trumpets it would appear that each kind of instrument was used. We gather that the cornet, or curved horn used on this occasion, was not the usual war trumpet, but rather that it was the signal of deliverance and of gladness : but the information that the Scripture furnishes us on this point does not enable us clearly to distinguish, at this distance of time, the leading differences in their use and import. The instrument in question is called the "*Shophar*," and the "*Shophar of Jobel*." This last term has been variously understood as the horn of *Jubal*, the horn of *Jubilee*, the *ram's* horn, and the *alarm*, or *shrill* horn. The other instrument, described in Numb. x., is the "*Chatsotsrah*." This name is, doubtless, onomatopoeic.

voice. The penetrating, dominating sound of such instruments conveys a mental effect that is conformable to this meaning. In many Scriptures, the trumpet is employed to symbolize the call of God to men to hear (Exod. xix. 16, 19; Matt. xxiv. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16). But the priests are also the representatives of the people before God, and the cornets which He bids them sound must, therefore, represent their testimony to His presence, and their cry for His help. Thus we find in other places of Scripture that the blowing of trumpets is regarded as an appeal to God. The promise ran thus: "*If ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your GOD, and ye shall be saved from your enemies*" (Numb. x. 9).

Here we see that, in another way, the significance of the blowing of the trumpet is two-fold. To God's people it has a cheering import, and is a means of assurance. It is a memorial before Him in their behalf, namely, that He is the LORD their God (Numb. x. 10): but to God's enemies it is an alarm to warn them of impending woe. It is God's own signal. He Himself is Captain, and cries alarm against them (2 Chron. xiii. 12; Zech. ix. 14).

5. Of the shout of Israel at the last, Henry says, "This was a shout for *mastery*, a triumphant shout,

'the shout of a king is among them' (Numb xxiii. 21). This was a shout of *faith*, they believed that the walls of Jericho would fall, and by that faith they were thrown down (Heb. xi. 30). It was a shout of *prayer*, an echo to the sound of the trumpets which proclaimed the promise that God would remember them. With one accord, as one man, they cry to heaven for help, and help comes in."

With this great shout of Israel, let us compare that of Gideon's three hundred, at which the Midianites were miraculously routed (Judg. vii. 20, 21). Let us also call to mind the songs of praise of Jehoshaphat's appointed singers, at which the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites were smitten by a like marked intervention of Divine power (2 Chron. xx. 21, 22).

6. It is not necessary to repeat what we have already said elsewhere (pp. 59, 60, 73, 79), on the symbolism of *the ark of GOD*, now borne in solemn pomp round and round the walls of Jericho—that token of God's presence, at the approach of which the waters of Jordan were driven back and stood on an heap; and before which, in later times, the image of Dagon fell shattered across the threshold of the temple in Ashdod.

Such was the apparatus, such the strategy, before which Jericho was to fall. Thus strange, and yet thus full of meaning was every detail. Note we herein, how, in Israel's siege against the first, and doubtless the most

formidable city that lay in their line of march, God would distinctly mark His own hand, and place human agency in abeyance, lest they should say in their heart, when He had brought them into the good land, “*My power, and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth*” (Deut. viii. 17).

We must now contemplate—

II.—THE CATASTROPHE.

The orders of the LORD are obeyed, sorely trying the faith of Israel; and calling forth, we may well suppose, mingled feelings within the devoted city. Some would tremble; others would laugh;* all would wonder.

Through six successive days the city is encompassed once, but the seventh day is diverse to the other days. In the early morning the significant parade begins. On

* Bishop Hall thus quaintly conceives the ridicule of the unbelievers in Jericho:—

“Doubtless, the inhabitants of Jericho made themselves merry with this sight. When they had stood six days upon their walls, and beheld none but a walking enemy, ‘What! (say they) could Israel find no walk to breathe them with, but about our walls? Have they not travelled enough in their forty years’ pilgrimage but they must stretch their limbs in this circle? Surely, if their eyes were engines, our walls could not stand: we see they are good footmen, but when shall we try their hands. What! do these vain men think Jericho will be won with looking at? or, do they only come to count how many paces it is about our city? If this be their manner of siege, we shall have no great cause to fear the sword of Israel!”

and on, all through the day it is continued: and as the seventh circuit is begun the shadows have begun to lengthen, and the evening is coming on apace. The seventh round is at length completed. A halt is called. Again the clarions sound, first with a prolonged blast, as though they said to Israel, "Your toils are now reaching their end, your jubilee is nigh;" and then, with a short, shrill, broken clang, that sounded like a message of wrath, and seemed to say to their enemies, "Your doom has come!" Then, ere the echo of the trumpets has died away, Joshua gives the word, "*Shout! for the LORD hath given you the city,*" and from every lusty son of Israel goes forth a great shout: when lo! without catapult, mine, or battering ram, the massive walls totter and fall as though they had been built of rotten wood, or had been suddenly upheaved by an earthquake. "The walls fell *under themselves.*" Such is the force of the original. No human effort; no power of nature was employed.* The *fiat* of JEHOVAH was the only operating cause. They fell at the voice of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils.

And now the encircling army ascend "*every man straight before him,*" bounding forward over the debris

* Those who, to evade the admission of a miracle, suggest that an earthquake, or a landslip occurred at this juncture, simply demand a yet stranger marvel. That a coincidence of natural events should have occurred is of course possible; but how then does the earthquake or landslip in question so exactly follow the line of the city wall, destroying that, and yet sparing the city itself?

of the fallen masonry, and bathe the sword in the blood of the awe-struck citizens, nor may they spare the innocent babe, the tender maiden, or the defenceless man of hoar hairs. Even the dumb cattle in the stalls are put to the sword, and the city with all its treasures is set on fire. Nothing is brought away except the gold and silver and the metal vessels which the people gather after the conflagration, and which, thus purified by fire, they hand over to the priests for the treasury of the house of the **LORD**.*

Thus fearful was the overthrow of the once prosperous but now ruined Jericho.

The general question of the destruction of the Canaanites, and the Divine purposes as exhibited therein, we must defer for more special consideration when we come to the history of the capture of Ai (LECTURE X.), when the details of the story will not be so full as in the present narrative, and more space will therefore be at our disposal for so important a topic : meanwhile, let us at once discern in the history of the outpouring of vengeance upon Jericho how exceeding sinful a thing is sin. As we in imagination see the flames of the accursed city rising up to heaven, we seem to read upon that fiery broadsheet, in letters of terror that gleam before the eyes of all Israel, the sentence—“ *Oh, do not that abominable thing that I hate!* ”

Yes, it was because of the foul iniquities of the

* Namely, it was melted down and turned into bullion to meet expenditure for directly religious uses (Numb. xxxi. 54).

inhabitants that Jericho and the other Canaanitish cities were destroyed. Stone walls cannot withstand God's wrath. Riches will not deliver from His hand, Sin brings a curse on the very place where it is harboured. Who can endure in the day when God begins to call man to account?

We have already (LECTURE III., pp. 42, 43) dwelt upon the gracious exception to the general devastation in the deliverance of Rahab and her family. "*By faith she perished not with the disobedient, having received the spies.*" What was her deliverance, and her subsequent exaltation in Israel but an anticipation of that grace that found expression in the words spoken in Jericho many centuries later by the SAVIOUR, of Whom, according to the flesh, she was an ancestor—" *The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost?*" The scarlet line of deliverance was her token, and it must be ours if we would be spared in the day of the LORD's wrath. Say, reader, is the blood of JESUS your true token?

The history of the destruction of Jericho closes with the mention of—

III.—THE ANATHEMA.

" *And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof*

*in * his first-born, and in * his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it."*

For nearly five centuries Joshua's imprecation was respected, and no man dared to rebuild the ancient Jericho,† notwithstanding its sheltered situation, and the fertility of the soil, and the beauty of the neighbourhood (2 Kings ii. 19). But at length a bold despiser arose. What was an old wives' tale to him? If in the days of wicked Ahab there were any found who feared God and regarded His word, it was not Hiel the Bethelite. If he needs a priestly blessing on his enterprise, he will go for it to the priests of Baal. The plan is drawn, the ground is measured, the trench is dug, the stones are quarried, and the foundation of the new wall is laid: when, lo! a messenger interrupts

* That is, "*at the price of.*" See Gen. xxix. 18. (Hebrew).

† Here a difficulty arises, for we find incidental notices of Jericho in the subsequent history previous to the date of the fulfilment of Joshua's curse (Judg. iii. 13; 2 Sam. x. 5). The explanation appears to be, that the actual site of the ancient Jericho was avoided out of regard to what Joshua had prophesied of the penalty to fall upon him who should rebuild the city, but that a village bearing the same name arose in the vicinity. To the present day there is a village bearing the name "El-Riha," evidently a corruption of "Jericho;" and there is at a mile and a half distant to the north-west of this village a fountain, "Ain-es-Sultan," or Elijah's fountain, near to which are ruins that doubtless mark the site of the ancient Jericho. Josephus refers to this as the *old city* (*Wars of the Jews*, 4. viii. 3). Ritter explains the difficulty otherwise, namely, by supposing that the city was not so far demolished as to be left wholly uninhabitable. Edersheim thinks that the ban of Joshua referred not to the rebuilding of Jericho, but to its restoration *as a fortified city*.

the busy scene. He comes from Bethel to the master builder, to bring him heavy tidings of the sudden death of Abiram, his eldest son. Pale and trembling goes Hiel to his home to mourn his loss, and to bury his first-born. But shall the works fourteen miles away at Jericho be countermaned? Shall the masons and builders be dismissed? Shall he own before men that he did wrong when he defied the God of Israel, and the anathema of Joshua His servant? Perhaps, after all, this is only one of those strange coincidences, that superstitious minds count supernatural, but which are purely accidental. At all events he will risk the consequences, and will pursue his purpose, and make himself a name. As the building progresses, his interest in the rising wall diverts his mind from his domestic sorrow, and it may be, thinks not of a further ill to come. At length the work is done; and the massive gates are hung upon their staples at the entry to the city; and Hiel, full of exultation, takes his journey home: but once more he finds that home a scene of bitter lamentation. Again the angel of death has visited his house, and Segub, his youngest son, the darling of his family, lies dead, "*according to the word of the LORD which He spake by Joshua the son of Nun* (1 Kings xvi. 34).

APPLICATION.

Let us now gather up the lessons of the subject of the destruction of Jericho.

I.

The PROGRAMME of the siege suggests the method we, too, must employ in our spiritual warfare.

1. In the story of the fall of Jericho is encouragement for the young believer. The Jordan is passed with you, and you have entered the LORD's land as one of His host. He has, too, in His ordinances, given you tender pledge of His love. You, like Israel at Gilgal, have kept the passover feast, feeding by faith upon the flesh of the slain Lamb of GOD! His SPIRIT has testified to your spirit that you are His child: and if a child, then also an heir. You, like Israel, have fed upon the fruits of Canaan. You, too, like Israel, have rejoiced to feel assured that the reproach has been rolled away. JESUS has revealed Himself to you as the Captain of your salvation. And yet, when you would advance to fuller enjoyment of your promised possession among the LORD's people, it has been as though a walled and barred Jericho stood out against you. Satan and sin have seemed, as it were, entrenched so firmly within the citadel of your heart, that you have been ready to despair of seeing them dislodged. But fear not: yield not: still go on in the holy walk of obedience to the law of GOD, trusting to the presence of the SAVIOUR, who walks in the midst of His people. Yes: as with Israel, so is the ark of GOD with

you. It may be that you, like Israel, must long persevere in patient effort before you prevail.* But, remember, it is something if meanwhile the legions of evil thoughts are but shut in, and kept low. Go forward: and by and by every imagination shall be cast down, and every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of CHRIST. Then up, and slay, and spare not; mortify each carnal lust, and give no quarter; let neither sloth nor Mammon turn you aside.

2. Let the ministers of JESUS also, and all workers in the Gospel, learn a lesson. See, here are barred stony hearts, that seem as if no battery could ever shake them or break them through. Here is cold indifference: here is hard-set prejudice: here is towering pride: here are deeply grounded depravities: buttressed with

* Bishop Hall thus beautifully, though perhaps somewhat fancifully, spiritualizes on the seven days:—"It had been as easy for God to have given this success to their first day's walk, yea, to their first pace, or to their first sight of Jericho; yet, He will not give it until the end of their seven days' toil. It is the pleasure of God to hold us both in work and in expectation; and though He require our continual endeavours for the subduing of our corruptions, during the six days of our life, yet we shall never find it perfectly effected till the very evening of our last day. In the meantime, it must content us that we are in our walk, and that these walls cannot stand when we come to the measure and number of our perfection. A good heart groans under the sense of its infirmities, fain would be rid of them, and strives and prays; but when he hath all done, until the end of the seventh day it cannot be. If a stone or two moulder off from these walls in the meantime, that is all; but the foundations will not be removed till then."

bad habits: fenced in with evil associations: here are men pledged and sworn to malice and hatred of the truth. What access is there for holy influences? How shall hearts like these be won? Your case, however, is contrary to that of Joshua's army. Their object was to destroy, but yours is to save the inhabitants of the city of destruction. Walk about, then, as those who claim your unconverted brethren for your Master. Sound the Jubilee trumpet in their ears.* Tell of deliverance and salvation. Tell of love divine. Tell of JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified, and, in God's own time, not by your might, nor by your power, but by the SPIRIT of the LORD, accompanying the Gospel message, the walls of opposition and defiance will fall.

II.

The CATASTROPHE before us affords most solemn warning to each unsaved and unregenerate sinner.

O careless one who makest light of thy godless practices, and Christless condition, canst thou ponder the solemn scene of vengeance here described, and not think of the greater and more terrible destruction that awaits a world of sinners. That woe, indeed, is past, and concerns thee not; but thou thyself art an inhabiter of this greater Jericho. That fire has long since died out, but this fire shall never be quenched. Harken!

* See the extract from "*The Valour of Faith*," by the Rev. G. A. ROGERS, at the close of this volume, APPENDIX B.

Even now God's faithful watchmen are sounding the alarm ; and soon thine ears shall hear the blast of the archangel, as he sounds the trump of God. Then, not the walls of Jericho, but the very rocks and hills shall quake, and shall fall at His presence. Say, art thou ready for the great and terrible day ? Hast thou made Rahab's covenant ? Is Jesus thy sure hope ?

III.

Joshua's **ANATHEMA**, too, has its application. Are there not Hieis yet among us who would restore ancient abominations, and would undo the mighty acts of reformation God hath wrought ? Are there not those who would rebuild Babylon the Great, and would revive priesthood, idolatry, and superstition ? Let such beware ! The Word of God has gone forth **against them**. The wrath of God is upon them. Was His curse upon the house of Hiel the Bethelite ? How, then, can they escape ?





LECTURE IX.

THE RETREAT OF THE LORD'S HOST; OR, AN ACCURSED THING IN THE CAMP.

“Thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.”

CHAPTER VII. 13.



ALL had gone well with the Israelites thus far. The Amorites on the east of Jordan had fallen: and, after the glorious passage through the river, all seemed to be about to prosper on the western border.

Jericho, the first city that they encountered, had yielded, and under such circumstances as manifested that the LORD fought for Israel. No human hand was raised; no engine plied: no missile hurled; but, “*by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encompassed seven days.*” At the unseen presence of God the fortress had been made a ruinous heap in the sight of Israel. We turn the page to read of

the advance of the camp in the march of conquest, and, lo ! the new chapter begins with the word "*But*," and proceeds to tell how sin has come in, and blasted all the blessing.

Such is our experience in this poor world of change. Like a ship in full sail we leave the port of youth, and have perhaps outridden the first storm. The gale is propitious : already we are estimating the value of the cargo, and rejoicing in prospect of a swift and sure arrival at the destined haven : when, suddenly, the flag of distress is hoisted—our ship has struck upon a hidden rock, and a fatal leak is sprung.

Thus is it with the nation whose prosperity thus far has cheered us with hope for ourselves that our portion might be even as theirs. May their reverses likewise be our warning.

The chapter before us records—

I.—A SORE DISASTER.

II.—A SAD LAMENT.

III.—A SECRET SIN.

IV.—A SOLEMN EXECUTION.

The LORD Himself, by His SPIRIT's teaching, enable us to gather the salutary lessons of the subject, for our souls' health !

I.—A SORE DISASTER.

The next city to Jericho, at some ten miles to the north-west, was Ai. "Its position," says Edersheim,

"was exceedingly important. Southwards, it opened the road to Jerusalem ; northwards, it commanded access to the heart of the country, so that, as we find in the sequel, a victorious army would march thence unopposed into the fertile district of Samaria. Moreover, the fate of Ai virtually decided also that of [the neighbouring dependency of] Bethel."

From Jericho Joshua sent spies to Ai, to report upon its strength and resources. They returned with the statement that the population was inconsiderable, and, venturing beyond their province, they undertook to recommend their general to spare an unnecessary outlay of effort, suggesting that a complement of some two or at most three thousand men would be a sufficient force to take the city. We find by a subsequent statement that the number of the inhabitants of Ai, including women and children, was actually 12,000 (viii. 25).

Without condemning Joshua's policy in sending spies to Ai, as he had done before in the case of Jericho, we may well wonder that he should depend upon their report, to the exclusion of his wonted resort to the holy oracle of God, whence counsel never failed him. In point of fact, the boastful advice of these vainglorious men was contrary to the **LORD's** order, afterwards given when the attack was reorganized. Then Joshua was bidden to "*take all the men of war with him.*" This was not the time for Israel to be studying to avoid expense of labour. In the languidness of the attack we discern one symptom of that spiritual weakness

that revealed itself in a yet more serious form. Though the paucity of the army sent against Ai was not the main cause of the defeat, the mingled self-confidence and inertness that was thus exhibited had allowed the more direct and potent cause of failure to escape detection and repression.

Would we succeed in our enterprises for God, and our conflicts with sin; we must not go forth with lazy, half-hearted efforts; but the whole man must be engaged. All our best faculties must be devoted to the thorough prosecution of the holy war. And, as the whole man, so the whole Church must join battle with the principalities and powers of darkness; none must stay behind.

What becomes of the three thousand sent against Ai? Do the walls fall before them as the walls of Jericho had fallen? Nay, they themselves flee discomfited before the men of Ai, who pour forth from the city gate to which they had rashly ventured, and chase them down the hill on which the city stood. As far as the quarries they pursue them, and "*about thirty and six*"* of the Israelites are left dead upon the slopes. When at length in broken file they reach the camp, and tell the tale of their disaster, a general panic occupies all the host. A little while ago the Canaanites

* Dr. CROSBY suggests that the lack of precision in this estimate of the number may arise from the circumstance that some of them may have been mortally wounded, but not actually slain on the spot.

were trembling, but now the hearts of the Israelites themselves “melt, and become as water.”

Christian, has it not been thus with thee? At some stout Jericho thou hast carried the day, and, by the help of thy God, thou hast leapt over a wall; but a little Ai lay next in thy line of march. A small duty demanded the exercise of Christian principle; a trivial temptation assailed thee; a puny hindrance withstood thee: and at that little Ai thou wast routed before the enemy. Come, then, with Joshua, and spread the case before the LORD, if so be He may discover unto thee the secret source of failure.

Let us hearken now to—

II.—A SAD LAMENT.

Homer describes the grief of Achilles, on hearing of the death of Patroclus:*

“With both his hands black dust he gathers now,
Casts on his head, and soils his comely brow;
Foul ashes cling his perfumed tunic round:
His noble form lies stretched upon the ground.”

Here, however, is a yet more heroic grief: in the page, not of a legendary epic, but of the Scripture of truth. Here lies Israel’s leader, with garments rent, and dust

* Αμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἐλῶν κόνιν αἰθαλέσσαν,
Χεύατο κακεφαλῆς· χάριεν δὲ ἡσχυνε πρόσωπον.
Νεκταρέω δὲ χιτῶνι μέλαιν' ἀμφίζανε τέφρη.
Αυτὸς δὲ ἐν κονίγοι μέγας μεγαλωστὶ τανυσθεὶς
Κεῖτο.

upon his head,* prostrate upon the earth, in speechless consternation. Thus he remains before the ark of God till eventide. The seventy elders surround him, with like tokens of grief; their hoary heads are bowed in silent sorrow.

At length he speaks, and pours out his prayer to God, or rather, his bitter wail of despair. Listen to his plaintive cry. *“Alas! O LORD GOD, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to GOD we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O LORD, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?”*

This is the hour of Satan's triumph. At such times the standard-bearers faint, and are weak as the rest of the host. Let God's saints beware, and take heed to their standing: for lo! the very greatest of spiritual heroes have quailed in time of danger, and yielded to unbelief (1 Sam. xvii. 1; 1 Kings xix. 3; Matt. xi. 3).

Who would have thought that a Joshua, who in early days had stilled the unfaithful spies in the

* The conventional accompaniments of emotion have greatly varied in different ages and nations: nor can the philosophy of such outward manifestations be fully explained. Squalor and abstinence have, however, always been regarded as the natural expression of deep sorrow.

wilderness, should, even in the land of promise, adopt their fears, and speak their language? Shall the first miscarriage destroy all hope of better days? And yet, though Joshua thus regrets that he and the people have at all crossed the Jordan, the closing words of his lament indicate that his faith and piety, so grievously shaken, are yet not dead. He is jealous for the honour of his God. "*What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?*" This is not the language of an unbeliever.

That we may understand the depth of Joshua's grief and dismay at what might, in so great a campaign, seem but a very inconsiderable loss, let us bear in mind the promises that had cheered him hitherto— "*There shall not a man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life*" (i. 5). Such was the word of God that had accompanied the charge, "*Arise, go over this Jordan;*" and he himself had, in the spirit of prophecy, declared to Israel, "*The living GOD is among you, and He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, &c.*" (iii. 10).

When he saw the Angel with the drawn sword, he trembled, in consciousness of his own and his people's sins and shortcomings, fearing lest that Angel had come to take the part of their enemies; but his misgivings were then set aside by the Angel's prompt negative, "*Nay, but as Captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.*" But now the day of grace and favour seems all at once to have passed away, and the tide of victory and success to have already turned. The ful-

filment of the dreadful threatenings of wrath written in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy seems now to have begun—" *Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. . . . The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies : thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them, &c.*" (Lev. xxvi. 17 ; Deut. xxviii. 19, 25).

Joshua did not overstate the danger when he referred to the effect the disaster would have in reanimating the Canaanites. And yet, as Bishop Hall points out, Divine wisdom overruled the matter for the more speedy and effectual prosecution of God's purpose. "I doubt not," he says, "but besides the punishment of Israel's sin, God intended the further obduration of the Canaanites. Like as some skilful player loses on purpose at the beginning of the game, to draw on the more abtempts. The news of their overthrow spread as far as the same of their speed ; and every city of Canaan could say, 'Why not we as well as Ai?' " As a matter of fact, we find that, even after Ai had fallen, the effect of the check Israel had received was still in operation, and a vast confederation of the nations of the land was formed to fight with Joshua (ix. 1, 2).

" *And the LORD said unto Joshua, 'Get thee up : wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face ?'*" Thus had He said to Moses on a like occasion, in rebuke of Israel's like utterance of despair—" *Wherfore criest thou unto Me ? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward*"

(Exod. xiv. 15). Thus too, in Gospel times, the same LORD rebuked the distrust of sinking Peter, "*O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*" God loves the prayers of faith, but He mislikes the reproaches of unbelief. Let those, then, who murmur against Him, and charge Him with unkindness and changeableness, rather accuse themselves, and inquire, "*Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me.*" Blessed are the defeats and happy the afflictions, that humble us, and teach us dependence upon God alone, and that bring us to the prayer, "*Search me, O GOD, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*"

After reproving Joshua's despair, the LORD reveals to him—

III.—A SECRET SIN.

"*Israel hath sinned.*" This was the source of failure. If the shadow falls, there is a substance. If there is an effect, there has been a cause. God is not arbitrary and fitful in His dealings. If, then, all at once Israel's blessings are turned away, this is the cause, "*Israel hath sinned.*" O Sin, what evils hast thou brought to pass! Joy flees away: prosperity declines at thy coming. Mourning and misery attend thy steps. Where thou hast found admission, he who was as bold as a lion now cowers as a timid hare. But a little

while ago the smile of heaven beamed with a mild glory upon Israel ; but now the anger of the LORD “blazes”* against His people, for “*Israel hath sinned.*”

Note that the LORD does not say, “A certain man in Israel has sinned,” but the matter is national. The nation has been punished, and God justifies His dealing by declaring the nation, and not the individual alone, to be guilty.

This is according to God’s universal procedure in the government of the world. A family or a people are regarded as a united whole. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. In judging a whole community, the aggregate of character and conduct must be taken. There is nothing unjust in this law, though its working may press heavily upon individuals. The same principle is recognised in human legislature. The innocent and the guilty cannot always be singled out for separate judgment. A man of worth exalts not himself alone, but his family also, and his very neighbourhood hold men indebted for his good deeds, while a criminal, in like manner, brings penalties upon his place and people.

The fact is, there is a reciprocal relation between a nation and the individuals who form that nation. If men make the age in which they live what it is ; on the other hand, it is the age that makes them what

* A constant figure. See Exod. xxiv. 17 ; Numb. xi. 1, 10 ; Deut. iv. 24 ; xxix. 20 ; Job xix. 11 ; xlvi. 7 ; Zech. x. 3 ; Heb. xii. 29 ; &c.

they are. The most marked character who leaves his impress, either for good or for evil, on his times is after all only a gauge of the highest point, or the lowest, as the case may be, which the tendencies of the times have reached in his day.

If we accept this view, we shall not be offended at the providence which visited Achan's sin upon the thirty-six soldiers who fell on the road to the quarries near Ai: nor shall we refuse the personal warning that is suggested by the words of the LORD in reference thereto. He saith not, "Achan hath sinned," but—
" *Israel hath sinned!*" Oh, that we may learn to take heed to ourselves, lest we bring a taint upon others than ourselves, for "*none of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself.*" Oh, that we may also look well around us, lest, by a guilty compliance, we harbour roots of bitterness whereby many may be defiled (Deut. xxix. 18; Heb. xii. 15), and thus we be made partakers of other men's sins.

How potent is sin ! Though but one drop of gall and wormwood be in the cup, the whole draught is infected. Though the venom of the serpent be but enough to moisten the fang, the bite is fatal. So is sin. One furtive act of disobedience is committed, and the prospects of a whole nation are endangered.

The LORD now unfolds to Joshua the nature of Achan's transgression. It was a many-sided sin.

" *They have transgressed my covenant which I com-*

manded them." It was, like the first sin that brought the curse upon mankind, an act of direct disobedience to an express charge. This primary matter of obedience can never be set aside: no professions or performances can compensate for its disregard (1 Sam. xv. 22).

"*They have even taken of the accursed thing.*" To mark God's detestation of the now full iniquity of the Amorites, He had, in the first siege in which Israel was engaged, forbidden any contact with aught that was theirs. The city Jericho and all that was therein was accounted as *cherem*, that is, devoted, and as such was doomed to destruction. God give us a true estimate of the weight of His curse upon sin, and cause us to abhor all contact and complicity therewith!

"*They have also stolen.*" Achan was not a poor man; he had oxen, asses, and sheep; and yet he lusted after riches; and this covetousness led him into theft. His was, moreover, a sacrilegious theft, for all that was devoted was claimed by the LORD. Achan had robbed the sanctuary. He saw a princely Babylonish mantle* in one of the houses, a garment of finest texture and purest dye, a wedge or "tongue" of gold, worth in our money some £90, and silver, of the value of £25. These excited his cupidity. "Whosoever," says Hall, "desires the glory of metals, or of gay clothes, or honour, cannot be innocent." "I saw, I coveted, I took." Such was the course of the sin of our mother Eve; such was the pathway of Achan's downfall; and, as the author just

* Literally, "a garment of *Shinar*."

quoted says again, “this hath been the order of our crimes—the eye betrayed the heart, and that the hand, and now all conspire in the offence.”

“*They have dissembled also.*” Achan had not walked, like a man, uprightly; but his gait had been like the stealthy creeping of a serpent. As the serpent is a hateful creature, so is he who is subtle and sly. God keep us from all underhand dealings and crooked courses! The bar of gold he had wrapped in the purple mantle, and the silver coin he had laid beneath, and all, thus placed, he had buried in the earth in the midst of the tent. Who would have suspected that ought was amiss? Only He who reads the secrets of the heart, before whom all things are manifest.

But now comes the climax. “*The accursed thing*” had been put “*among their own stuff.*” Contrast the noble refusal of Abraham to receive the spoils offered by the king of guilty Sodom. When Moses declared the coming doom of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, he warned the people, “*Touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins*” (Numb. xvi. 26). Achan by his act has imported the taint of Jericho into the camp of Israel. A Canaanitish element is now there. The camp has become a curse (vi. 18).

Let us examine our hearts? Is “*the accursed thing*” hidden there? Have we become worldly by admitting the world into our hearts? Is Mammon lodged within? Is ought that belongs to Satan’s kingdom cherished? Let us examine our homes. Are there no

unholy things there that savour of idolatry or of impurity, and that befit not the gospel of JESUS? Let nothing accursed be brought in from Jericho, let no Babylonish ornaments and treasures bring a ban upon our own persons, our houses, and upon our country. Especially let us see that no unrighteous gains find their way into our coffers. Let Achan be our warning, or like Achan we shall perish, and we shall not perish alone in our iniquity (xxii. 20). It is vain to think to prosper, still less to prevail in the *LORD*'s service, and to conquer our spiritual enemies, unless we keep ourselves from every wicked thing: one tolerated sin will cause the *LORD* to turn away (Deut. xxiii. 9, 14).

We read, lastly, in the chapter before us, of—

IV.—A SOLEMN EXECUTION.

That night the order is delivered throughout the camp. Though it is already dark, the officers are sent forth, and thus runs the proclamation—“*Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, for thus saith the *LORD GOD* of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.*”

What must have been the feelings of the guilty man on that night when all Israel round him were solemnly consecrating themselves to God with tears, and prayers,

and fasting? Did he conform to the externals of humiliation? Did he reason with himself that surely the rescue of such costly spoil from waste could not have brought about so dire results; or did he hope that treasures so carefully concealed would never be discovered? Did he still gloat over his fancied wealth with satisfaction, or was it already piercing him through with many sorrows? Whatever his state of mind, he still hides his sin in his bosom as deep as the treasure itself was hidden within the tent.

The morning comes. The assembly is called. The lots are cast into the lap. The prayer is offered, “*Give a perfect lot!*” (1 Sam. xiv. 41). The drawing begins * The tribes are named one by one, and, lo! the tribe of Judah is drawn, the royal tribe. The tribe whence one day the Saviour of mankind should spring, now furnishes “*the Troubler of Israel.*”

By degrees the circle is narrowed. After the tribe, the family or clan is taken. Then the houses in that family are enumerated, and the incriminated house is discovered—and, last of all, the individual—“*Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.*”

With what trepidation must he have watched the process, and noted how as time after time the lots were

* The method employed in the drawing of lots has not been handed down to us, perhaps as an indication that God would not have us perpetuate this means of ascertaining His will in Gospel times. The Moravian Church, however, still retains it.

drawn, the finger of God was more and yet more distinctly pointing to him, until he stands alone before Joshua and all the heads of Israel as the guilty cause of the calamity they have sustained.

Not less sure shall be the conviction of every unpardoned sinner at a yet greater tribunal. Oh, to be wise in time, and to anticipate that day ! God give us grace to yield to those convictions of sin which His HOLY SPIRIT causes, and to seek pardon and reconciliation through CHRIST, ere the thrones be set, and the books opened, and it be too late. More awful then shall be the portion of the guilty, for there is at least a gleam of hope here in Achan's case.

“*My son,*” says Joshua, in compassion for the wretched culprit, who stands pale and trembling waiting the sentence of death ; and he then bids him “*give glory* to the LORD GOD of Israel*” by a full confession, that is, that he would, by stating the circumstances of his transgression, publicly vindicate the justice of God in the penalty that had fallen upon the nation, and which was now to overtake himself.

His confession, though so long deferred, and only elicited after his conviction, was not indeed meritorious ; but it was ample and explicit ; encouraging us to hope that even Achan may have found mercy as regards his soul (1 John i. 9). God only knows.

* The phrase seems to have been adopted as a formula for inviting confession (see John ix. 24). It occurs Jer. xiii. 16, where the sense is given in the parallel, “*be not proud,*” v. 15.

Terrible is Achan's doom. His tent is treated as though it had been part and parcel with Jericho itself. As there, so here; no mercy is shown to man, woman, or child. All that he has, sons, daughters, cattle, his very tent itself, and all his property, including the stolen goods,* are taken out to a valley that henceforth is called the valley of *Trouble*, for such is the meaning of the name Achor,† so called after Achan, the *Troubler* of Israel.

There, not as a writer has chosen to suppose, at the instance of "a sudden impulse of indiscriminate popular vengeance," but by the word of the **LORD**, Joshua pronounces sentence, not only on Achan himself, but also on all his family, who are first stoned with stones,‡ and then, with his goods, are burned with fire.

We have already ventured to express a hope that Achan's soul may have been saved: but for the body to be burned with fire after death, how ghastly! True, the inanimate corpse feels nothing; but how significant

* It is not necessary to assert, with some writers, that the silver and the gold were left beneath the heap of stones. There is no reason for supposing this departure from the prescribed usage (Num. xxxi. 22, 23).

† The valley of Achor is twice referred to in the later Scriptures (Isa. lxv. 10, and Hos. ii. 15). The names of "Achan" and "Zabdi" appear as "Achar" and "Zimri" in the Book of Chronicles (1 Chron. ii. 6, 7).

‡ The fact that in verse 25, the singular "*him*," used in reference to the stoning, has led some commentators to suppose that Achan's sons and daughters were not destroyed. But the same idiom is found at ch. ii. 6, where evidently more than one person is intended.

a representation is *Cremation* of the flames of hell ! God has taught us in His word to regard the peaceful grave—the decent burial—the return of the body to the bosom of mother earth from whence it came, as a type of the sweet sleep of God's saints, previous to the general awakening at the great day (1 Kings xiv. 13 ; &c).

By Achan's execution, the fierce anger of the LORD is turned away from Israel. The blood of the troubler of Israel and his house has made atonement, and the curse is withdrawn. No more will Ai now be victorious over the LORD's host. We have gathered many lessons from this narrative, but this is the greatest, and the most precious. It is an argument of contrast. If guilt was removed by the death of wicked Achan, how much more will the blood of the holy SON OF GOD prevail to avert the curse. Our doings have provoked the eyes of Thy glory, and for a little moment hast Thou hidden Thy face from us, and we have fallen before our spiritual foes. Yet pardon us, O our GOD, for JESUS'sake, "*Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.*" Glory, glory be to GOD ! In JESUS—our *Folly* that we have wrought in Israel is done away. In Him—*Trouble* is at an end. Through this better atonement the LORD renews His word unto us, as then unto pardoned Israel. "*Fear not, neither be thou dismayed !*" (viii. 1). Trusting in this full, perfect, and sufficient atonement, we may say, "*O LORD, I will praise Thee : though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me*" (Isa. xii. 1).



LECTURE X.

THE SECOND VICTORY OF THE LORD'S HOST; OR, THE CAPTURE OF AI.

“And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day.”

CHAPTER VIII. 28.

“**F**EAR not, neither be thou dismayed!” With such a word had God encouraged Joshua to cross the Jordan, and take possession of the land of seven mighty nations. Victory crowned Israel’s first march against the Canaanites, for God was with them. But sin came in, and brought a fatal reverse; and Israel turned their backs before their enemies. Already would their prosperity have been at an end, had not God discovered to Joshua the secret cause of failure. The offender is at length detected: he owns his guilt: and is put to death with all his house, and thus the camp is purged. And now once more, as at the first,

God cheers His servant Joshua with the inspiriting exhortation, "*Fear not, neither be thou dismayed!*"

Let those who, like Israel, have forfeited their blessings through their remissness and their disobedience ; but who, with Israel, have mourned and repented before God, take comfort, and prepare for new conflicts with sin and Satan ; and hope for fresh victories. Through the death of Him who has borne their sins upon Himself, a full atonement has been made, and the Lord has turned from the fierceness of His anger. To thee also, Christian soldier, the Lord says to-day, as to Joshua in the chapter before us, "*Fear not, neither be thou dismayed!*"

When Joshua, upon the information of the scouts whom he had sent out, had himself organized the former attack upon Ai, he failed : this time the Lord instructs him in the order of the siege. Blessed is the privilege of those who move at His bidding, and act under His direction in all the details of duty!

1. The Lord bids Joshua arise and go up himself to Ai, taking all the people of war with him. There was a latent rebuke in this charge. To teach Israel humility, and to reveal His almighty hand, God may bid Gideon dismiss the bulk of his army, and go to fight the host of Midian attended by but three hundred men. The two hundred and thirty-two young men of the princes of the provinces may suffice to rout Benhadad's great multitude. It is the same with God to save with many

or with few. But now another lesson must be taught. None may tarry at home in the holy war against the Canaanites, nor think to conquer by proxy. Each and all must do their part. Let us take the admonition to ourselves. How often have we been lax in our resistance of sin, neglectful of the means of grace, putting forth but half our strength in the pursuit of holiness, and yet we have expected the strongholds of Satan to fall before us. It was not thus that Ai was taken.

2. As in the case of Jericho, so here also, the city, the king, and the people are to be utterly destroyed, but, the first-fruits of the campaign having then been consecrated to God, the Israelites are now permitted to secure the spoil and the cattle for themselves: thus was a restriction graciously removed that on that former occasion had proved a snare. There was, moreover, an important symbolical bearing in the compulsory abstinence from all that pertained to the accursed city. It was enjoined in order to show that God's people must be separate from sinners, and touch not the unclean thing. That caution, now sufficiently impressed upon the nation, needs not to be repeated in every case. Even the cities and houses were not to be destroyed in the continuance of the war, the Israelites being allowed to take them and dwell in them themselves* (Deut vi. 11; xix. 1).

* Hazor, however, the city of Jabin, being another metropolis, and the centre of the confederation of all northern Canaan, was burnt (xi. 13).

3. The next part of the proceedings in which Joshua receives instruction, relates to the laying of an ambush behind the city. No miracle is to be looked for as at Jericho. This time God will shew how He can bless implicit obedience, hearty effort, and prudent measures.

The stratagem to which Joshua is instructed to have recourse was one that would have commended itself to Joshua's military judgment. Could we now in our personal difficulties obtain an intervention of Divine help, and receive directions in an audible voice from heaven, God would but bid us use those natural resources that He has placed within our reach. His blessing is upon the knowledge, the experience, the skill, the talents of His servants. Let us seek, then, to improve and employ these to the best advantage for the prosecution of His cause. In His sovereignty He may dispense with means, and work by miracles; but His ordinary course is analogous to that illustrated in the present narrative.

Like a sketch by a master-hand, in which a few skilful strokes have produced a vivid picture, so here the story of the siege is told with graphic simplicity. We read first of Joshua's communication of the orders to the thirty thousand selected for the ambush. This was the special feature in the attack that the LORD had named to Joshua: and upon this, accordingly, he bestows especial consideration. These chosen mighty men are dismissed to the ravines and woods between

Bethel and Ai.* They are not to go to a great distance from Ai; but are to be in readiness to seize and to fire the city, when, upon a feigned retreat on the part of the Israelites, the men of Ai shall leave the city defenceless. In obedience to these orders, which are from the LORD Himself, he assures them that the city will be delivered into their hand.

Joshua, meanwhile, remains that night [apparently] in Gilgal, with the rest of the army, whom in the morning he numbers, and then leads to Ai, marching himself in the van, attended by the seventy elders. The distance to Ai was about twenty miles. Arriving there, he pitches his camp upon the far side of a valley that was to the north of the city. His next step is to tell off a detachment of five thousand men, whom he sends to lie in ambush upon the west of the city.

The mention of this second ambush has occasioned considerable difficulty among commentators. Some have supposed that the narrative from the tenth verse is a repetition of that of the beginning of the chapter, and that the thirty thousand chosen mighty men represented the army that accompanied Joshua, and that the five thousand now mentioned were either drawn from these or selected as an additional corps. In this case, the thirty thousand must be the same as those who are described as "*the people*" (viii.10): but the thirty thousand

* The difficulty that Masius and Calvin find in the concealment of so large a force as 30,000, is said to be explained by acquaintance with the locality, with its dense olive plantations, and deep chasms, and intervening hills.

and the people are plainly marked off from one another (viii. 3). The former are sent away, while Joshua lodges with the latter that same night (viii. 9). Thus this explanation violates the integrity of the record. In this case, moreover, Joshua would be disobeying the **LORD's** order to take "*all the people of war*" with him, for the entire force of Israel was far in excess of that number, any one of the tribes being able to furnish a larger complement (Numb. i.).

Another explanation of the difficulty is suggested by the narrative itself.* Incidental mention is made of the men of Bethel as co-operating with the men of Ai. It seems, then, very probable that the second ambush was laid in order to operate against this city. If we may be allowed to conjecture, we may well suppose that when the king of Ai became aware of the presence and hostile intentions of the Israelites, he, whether by signals or by envoys, communicated with the king of Bethel, and that Joshua, receiving intelligence of this movement, appointed this lesser ambush. What office

* Of one thing we may be quite sure, and that is, that there is no "mistake," as some have ventured to assert, in the variation between the numbers of the ambush given at verses 3 and 12. Scarcely more satisfactory is the suggestion of an error in the transcription of the ancient manuscripts. Nothing is easier than to assume at once at every difficulty that the text is faulty; and nothing is more perilous to confidence in, and reverence for the Scriptures. Certainly the suggestion of a textual inaccuracy is the very last refuge the humble Bible student will resort to in the explanation of an apparent discrepancy; while the suggestion that the record itself may be erroneous or confused is one to which he must never have recourse.

was assigned to the five thousand is not stated; nor is there any further mention of the Bethelites than the fact that they all came out from their city* to pursue the Israelites (viii. 17). They appear to have been destroyed with the men of Ai on this occasion, for “*the king of Bethel*” is mentioned among the conquered powers whose land was possessed by the Israelites (xii. 16). The city itself, however, was not permanently taken until a later date (Judg. i. 23—26). The Bethelites are not included in the calculation of those who fell that day, for it is expressly said of the twelve thousand men and women killed, that they were “*all the men of Ai*” (viii. 25).

This conjecture, namely, that the five thousand were commissioned to cut off the escape of the Bethelites,† is not invalidated by the fact that the fate of the Bethelites is passed by, and the task assigned to the five thousand is not stated. Great artists do not squander their skill upon accessory details, nor would the inspired historian break the unity of his subject by introducing finely worked outside pieces. Let us, too, be content to leave minor questions, and confine our study to his central subject—the capture of Ai.

The stratagem succeeds. What will not succeed when God directs and blesses our endeavours? The

* And not, as Calvin supposes, having come for greater security within the walls of Ai beforehand.

† The author had already put forth this hypothesis before he met with it, expressed in much the same form, in GROSSE's “*Joshua and his Successors.*”

plan is carried out; the preconcerted retreat is made. The Canaanites fall into the snare, and make a sortie, leaving their gates open and their city unprotected.

The LORD Himself now gives a token, bidding Joshua stretch forth the javelin* that was in his hand—an emblem of the weapons of Divine judgment that were directed against the doomed city and its inhabitants. At this signal, seen afar off and easily read by those who had heard from their fathers of Moses' outstretched rod, and the power of God that accompanied that sign, the thirty thousand emerge from their secret lair, where for two weary nights and one whole day they had been concealed, and entering the city they set fire to it.

The Canaanites now discover their predicament. They are hemmed in on all sides. Behind them rise the red flames roaring on high, and before them are the Israelites, now turning upon them, sword in hand. Terrible is the story of the sacking of Ai, told in a few brief lines—how the defenders, drawn forth from the fortress by the simulated flight of their assailants, were surprised and surrounded; how Joshua still stretched forth his javelin, and drew not his hand back; how first the routed army was pursued and slain in the open field; how the conquerors next entered the burning town, and cut down all before them, sparing none;

* The Vulgate and several other translations render the word used "shield;" but this would be an unwieldy signal: it would, moreover, appear less suitable, as a shield would rather symbolize *protection* than *destruction*. (Compare 2 Kings xiii. 18.)

how the spoil and the cattle were taken for a prey, according to the word of the LORD which He spake to Joshua ; how the king was hanged upon a tree till evening, and his body at sunset covered with a heap of stones at the city gate ; how the city, already partially consumed, was then completely burnt with fire, and made a desolation and a heap for ever.

Ai was apparently rebuilt in later days, for we meet with mention of it again in Bible history (Ezra ii. 28 ; Neh. xi. 31 ; Isa. x. 28) ; but at the present day a spot is pointed out to travellers as EL TEL, “The heap.” The site of Ai was a matter of doubt and disputation with topographers until recently ;* but in this EL TEL the latest investigators, namely, those sent out by the Palestine Exploration Society, have recognised not only the site of the ancient Ai, but also a remarkable fulfilment of the very words of Scripture, in which it was declared that Ai should be “*An heap for ever*” (viii. 28).

Let us turn now to the question which we promised in a former lecture (p. 132) to take up, in connection with our exposition of the present chapter, namely, that of—

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES.

At this distance of time we hear with but little concern of the taking of Ai, and of the slaughter of the

* See RITTER’s “*Comparative Geography of Palestine*,” vol. iv., pp. 222, 223 (Clark’s Foreign Theological Library).

citizens, but could we realize the scene of blood—could we see the agonized countenances of the warriors falling, whole legions together, under arms, cut down in the midst of life and strength—could we hear the shrieks of the dying—could we see even women and children and aged people falling beneath the unsparing sword—we should realize the horrors of the scene. Ai was, however, but one city in a populous country. What took place there took place throughout the land.

There is no way of palliating the awfulness of this widespread slaughter: the subject is confessedly one of the most painful on which the mind can rest. Infidels of every age have fixed upon the history of the extermination of the Canaanites, and the razing of goodly cities level with the ground; and have blasphemed against God and His holy Word. Rationalists, again, have unhesitatingly ascribed the severity of the transaction recorded to the barbarity of a period of semi-civilization, and have rashly set aside the inspiration of the Scriptures that ascribe the destruction of the Canaanites to the God of love. While profane objectors have cavilled at, and sceptics of another school have sought to explain away the difficulty, many sincere believers have been troubled at the seeming wrong, namely, that the Israelites should thus violently wrest the land of Canaan from the hands of the former possessors, against whom they had no quarrel, and should so pitilessly put whole nations to the sword.

Various apologies have been put forth by those who

have not rightly apprehended the case. It has been said that the land really belonged to the Israelites, having been assigned to them by God before the Egyptian bondage, by the promise made to Abraham and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob ; and that thus they were but claiming the surrender of what they had a divine right to possess.

This explanation is unsatisfactory. The land was indeed covenanted to Abraham and his seed, but so far was Abraham from regarding the land as belonging to him, that he did not, all his lifetime, claim as much as would lie beneath the sole of his own foot, and thus he had to buy for money of Ephron the Hittite, as his grandson Jacob in like manner had to buy of Hamor the father of Shechem, a place for the burial of the dead.

Even had God's promise given a right of possession, the long sojourn of Israel in Egypt, would, ere this, have invalidated any title that that might have given their successors. The Canaanites had now what is known in legal language as “prescriptive possession.”

Nor is there any authority for the Rabbinical tradition that Joshua, before he invaded the land, proposed to the Canaanites the alternative of flight, or a peaceful surrender, or a contest of arms.* No league was per-

* “Joshua sent three writings before he came into the land. First, he sent unto them thus, ‘*He that will flee, let him flee.*’ Again he sent, ‘*Whoso will make peace, let him make peace.*’ And again he sent, ‘*Whoso will make war, let him make it.*’”—MAIMONIDES, “*Treatise of Kings*,” chap. vi., sect. 4, 5. Quoted by Ainsworth on Deut. xx. 16.

mitted, much less invited. It was only to nations beyond the borders of Canaan that such terms might be proposed (Deut. xx. 15).

This, then, is but an invention put forth as an expedient for evading the difficulty. We must look elsewhere for argument to justify the terrible war of aggression, extermination, and annexation recorded in the Book of Joshua ; nor, if we take the Word of God for our guide, and read it aright, shall we look in vain for the solution of all that perplexes us.

The title with which the Lord designates the army of Israel [and which we have accordingly adopted as the title of the present volume] sufficiently indicates the character of the quarrel with the Canaanites : it did not lie between them and the Israelites, but between them and God. Thus Israel is spoken of as “THE LORD’s HOST.”* They were but as the sword in His hand, appointed to execute His wrath. If we read the history with this view of the relation of the Israelites to the Canaanites, all difficulty vanishes.

Let us, then, so regard the matter ; not as an ordinary human campaign instigated by the ambition of princes, the lust of military glory, the greed of conquest, the rankling of ancient wrongs, the jealousy of rival races, or the murderous propensities of bloodthirsty hordes ; but as a solemn work of Divine judgment.

* The reasons for rejecting the interpretation which refers this designation to the angelic host are stated at pages 118, 119.

Thus considered, we shall see that—

I.—*The destruction of the Canaanites was in conformity with the ordinary procedure of GOD in the moral government of the world.*

Isaac Taylor remarks that, “if all the Bibles in the world were thrown into the chasm that this difficulty spans, they would not fill it up;” for, though the extermination of the Canaanites be one of the greatest visitations that mankind has experienced, it is after all only one out of many visitations. More extensive, if not more horrible, was the deluge that swept away the whole world of humanity save eight persons. Equally sudden and equally dreadful was the destruction of four great cities of the ancient world by fire and brimstone from heaven. The slaying of the first-born in Egypt; the drowning of Pharaoh’s host in the Red Sea; the earthquake that swallowed up Korah and his gainsaying confederation; the great plague that afterwards broke out in the camp of Israel; the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and in later times by the Romans; the wars, the fires, the floods, the famines, the plagues, the devastations that in every age have overtaken the wicked, and decimated the earth of its inhabitants—all these are in entire conformity with the example of Divine vengeance now under consideration. Could that be removed from the page of facts, the difficulty would meet us in every one of the cases referred to; and it meets us in yet more tremendous propor-

tions, when we consider the final destruction that even now awaits the wicked in the torments of hell-fire.

What then? Shall we dare, with proud free-thinkers, first to create a God according to our own estimate of what His attributes should be, and then, with Jehoiakim's penknife, cut out all that does not coincide therewith? Shall we smooth away all that pains and perplexes us, and in the case of the conquest of Canaan, attribute to Joshua, or to the Israelites, a course of action which the Scripture attributes expressly to God alone?

Shall we smooth away, too, all that pains and perplexes us in reference to the future condition of lost souls; and, forsooth, discover by a crooked criticism that eternity is not for ever, except when it means an eternity of bliss; and that the undying worm is but an Oriental trope? But, before we conclude in reference to these difficulties in the recorded past, and the revealed future, let us consider the mysteries of the present. Let us first smooth away the fact of the existence of present pains and present sorrows. Surely, if God be a God of mercy and of love, distress must be a fancy and disease a dream! Alas! every day's experience forces these hard facts upon us. Amid earth's many voices we still hear lamentations, and mourning, and woe. Plagues, famines, wars, and calamities are reported; nor can we explain these things away.

In reference to the LORD's employment of the Israelites to execute His purposes of wrath against the

Canaanites, how does that affect the matter? If He choose, in punishing sinners, to visit at one time with a flood of waters, at another with fire from heaven, at another with a deadly epidemic, at another with the scourge of war, who shall dare to question the propriety of His choice in the weapons of destruction?

II.—*The destruction of the Canaanites was in punishment of sin, and as such was just towards themselves.*

The LORD said of Canaan, before He brought the Israelites in, “*The land is defiled: therefore, I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants*” (Lev. xviii. 25). The vilest practices were rife among the people. Their very religion was a system of sorcery, sensuality, and depravity. The traces of ancient Syrian worship exhibit the vilest features of Pagan idolatry. Their very gods were demons (Ps. cvi. 37). Human sacrifices were offered at their shrines. The grossest abominations were practised in their orgies. If such, then, was the light, what would the darkness be? In other words, if this was the religion of the country, what would the vices of the people be? The corruption of morals in heathen lands is, in our own day, so gross that Christian parents dread the contamination of the character of their children more than they dread the effects of a tropical climate upon their bodily constitutions. This analogy may give us some idea of the

moral degradation of the inhabitants of Palestine before the invasion. The country must have presented the spectacle of one seething mass of corruption : it must have been a very hell upon earth. The confession of Adonibezek, how seventy kings had eaten their meat at his table, all of whom he had mutilated in their hands and feet (Judg. i. 7), affords us an incidental glimpse of the barbarities that prevailed.

Now note : In all their enormities, the Canaanites were not without light and knowledge sufficient to leave them without excuse. Abraham had set them an example of a holy life, and a pure worship. Melchizedek, too, had lived and ministered among them. Isaac and Jacob had, moreover, confirmed the witness of these holy men of God. The destruction of the cities of the plain of Jordan was as well known to them as to the Israelites themselves. The later history of Israel was familiar to them, as we see by Rahab's declaration (ii. 10). They knew the story of the Exodus, and of the overthrow of Pharaoh ; and now for forty years they had had the facts of Israel's experience before their eyes. The LORD of all the earth (iii. 11) had witnessed to His presence and Godhead in the miracles which, on so grand a scale, were exhibited in His care of His people. The daily fall of manna ; the opened fountain in the rock ; the fiery and cloudy pillar ;—these tokens were not revealed in a corner. The Canaanites knew of these things, and yet they refused the LORD for their God.

The destruction of the Amalekites, of the Midianites, and of the transjordanic Amorites, was a sufficient warning to them if only they had not hardened their hearts in infatuated obstinacy.

Even when Israel crossed the Jordan, if they, at the sight of the miraculous parting of the river, like the Ninevites of later times, had repented in dust and ashes, and cried mightily to God, they would have been spared; but they hardened their necks, and so were cut off without remedy.

III.—The destruction of the Canaanites was a spiritual safeguard to the Israelites.

We are tempted to ask whether it was well that the Israelites should be made the executioners of God's wrath upon their brother man. Would they not be tempted to lose sight of their subordination to God's purpose, and to take up the cause with feelings of popular fanaticism? Again, would not the part to which they were called tend to foster in them cruelty and recklessness of human life?

On the contrary, we find that the snare of the Israelites lay in the opposite direction, and that they were ever more ready to spare than to slay. No token appears of any tendency to rapacity or violence having been impressed upon the national mind, while the salutary lessons that were thus taught them are apparent. In no way could the Israelites have been so forcibly

convinced of the hatefulness of idolatry and impurity, as when they themselves were made God's ministers of vengeance against the crying evils. They were thus made witnesses against themselves should they ever adopt like abominations.

God's hatred of idolatry was indelibly written in characters of blood in all the land, and the Israelites with their own hands, and their own swords, had, at His dictation, inscribed the writing. The history of those times was a testimony against those who took part therein, if they should follow the practices of the Amorites. Their houses, their fields, and all they had spoke of God's wrath against the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth and Moloch, and against the immoralities that had defiled the land.

Such was, in point of fact, the efficacy of this practical preservative, that, for one generation at least, the gods of the conquered Amorites lay despised, and Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua.

IV.—The destruction of the Canaanites was necessary for the moral preservation of the world.

Clearly it was an act of mercy to the little children of the Canaanites, who were cut off before they knew between good and evil. Dying thus in innocence of actual sin, the merits of the Lamb of God appointed in the counsels of God would save these little

babes, notwithstanding the taint of their heathen descent; but had they lived, they would have become personally responsible; and would soon have been educated in every crime, and, finally, would have partaken of the wrath of God, with their wicked countrymen.

To the Israelites, the extirpation of these nations was an act of mercy. Even crippled and curtailed as the Canaanites were, their influence for evil was too strong; but had they remained in larger bodies, and especially had the women been spared, piety would soon have become unknown among the people of God. The Canaanites were as men infected with the plague, whose removal from the community afforded the only prospect of safety for others.

But if the destruction of the Canaanites was an act of mercy to Israel, and necessary for their spiritual safety, it follows that it was not less a mercy to the whole world, and necessary for the preservation of the spiritual life of the entire family of mankind. For the Jewish nation was appointed to become the channel through which the knowledge of God should be diffused to all nations. Had this channel been choked or diverted, all nations would have suffered from the lack of the waters of life. In Israel's sanctification lay the foundation of the evangelization and sanctification of men in the remotest future, and at the ends of the earth. The Jews were God's chosen conservators of His holy oracles. If they had been seduced from His

worship, the Scriptures would have perished, and with them all would have perished. True religion would in fact have been abolished altogether.

The Church of the present day is but the continuation of the Church in the wilderness. Had that been destroyed, the materials of which the SAVIOUR at His coming built the Church of the New Testament would not have been in existence. The impediments in the way of the Gospel would have been tenfold. To the present day the early ruin of the faith of God's people which would have resulted from the general toleration of the Canaanites, would have borne its bitter fruits.

V.—The destruction of the Canaanites has a deep symbolical and practical lesson for us all.

God changes not: the same principles direct His dealings now as then. Thus we read in the destruction of the Canaanites a prophecy of the outpouring of the vials of the wrath of God upon a world of evil doers.

Already in this discourse, and also in a former lecture (see pp. 138, 139), we have touched upon this view of the subject. We regard the great catastrophe recorded in this portion of Scripture but as an anticipation and allegory of "*the wrath to come.*" Yes: the history before us is not a question of extinct races, and past times; but it concerns us ourselves.

How solemnly does the subject speak to men of Canaanitish heart in Christian lands! Did God cut off those

poor heathen in the midst of their iniquities, and will He spare thee who art still serving the world, the flesh, and the devil, and still resisting grace, though living in the full light and liberty of the Gospel dispensation? What a call, then, is there here to repentance! Flee, sinner, flee, ere the armies of destroying angels are commissioned to execute the sentence of wrath upon this wicked world!—flee, ere thou thyself be hewn down as an unprofitable tree!—flee even now to Him who died in the sinner's stead, and be reconciled to God, lest it fare worse with thee than with the men of Ai, and the rest of the Canaanites, whom He destroyed before Israel!

For the child of God, too, there is a lesson. Let him learn here his relation to this wicked world. They are as the Canaanites of old, but he is one of the LORD's host. What then? is he to go forth sword in hand to slay? Nay, in this point the analogy must be inverted. He is indeed, like his Master, to be "*separate from sinners*," apprehending their impending doom; and yet, like his Master, he is to go forth among them with "*the sword of the SPIRIT*"—not to *destroy* men's lives, but to *save*. He is to testify of salvation, and thus to convert sinners from the error of their ways, and to rescue their souls from death.

Let the Christian learn, moreover, his relation to sin. As he reads of God's hatred to this evil thing, let him hate it and shrink from all contamination with it, and avoid all toleration of it. Ah! there be Canaanites

within our own bosoms,—a confederation of lusts and passions that war against the SPIRIT. With these there must be no covenant nor quarter. The flesh must be mortified and subdued. See JESUS, our Joshua, stretches forth the spear. He commands the conflict: onward, then, and conquer. Looking unto JESUS the victory shall be thine. It is thus that the Israel of God prevails.

In closing the subject, I cannot refrain from transcribing a paragraph from the late Principal Fairbairn's chapter on this subject in his "*Typology of Scripture*": "The place chosen for the inheritance of Israel was allowed to become, in a peculiar sense, the region of pollution—a region that required to be sanctified by an act of Divine judgment upon its corrupt possessors, and thereby fitted for becoming the home and heritage of saints. In this way alone could the things done concerning it shadow forth, and prepare for, the final possession of a glorified world,—an inheritance which also needs to be redeemed from the powers of darkness that meanwhile overspread it with their corruptions, and which must be sanctified with terrible acts of judgment upon their ungodliness, before it can become the meet abode of final bliss. The spirit of Antichrist must be judged and cast out; Babylon, the mother of abominations, which has made the earth drunk with the wine of her fornications, must come in remembrance before God, and receive the due reward of her sins; so that woes of judgment, and executions of vengeance

must precede the Church's occupation of her purchased inheritance, similar in kind to that which put Israel in possession of the land of Canaan. What indeed are the scenes presented to our view in the concluding chapters of Revelation, but an expansion to the affairs of a world, and the destinies of a coming eternity, of those which we find depicted in the wars of Joshua? In these awful scenes we behold, on the one hand, the Captain of our salvation, of whom Joshua was an imperfect type, going forth to victory with the company of a redeemed and elect Church, supported by the word of God, and the irresistible artillery of heaven; while, on the other hand, we see the doomed enemies of God and the Church long borne with, but now at last delivered to judgment—the wrath falling on them to the uttermost,—and, when the world has been finally relieved of their abominations, the new heavens and the new earth rising into view, when righteousness, pure and undefiled, is to have its perennial habitation."





LECTURE XI.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE LORD'S HOST AT EBAL AND GERIZIM.

“Then Joshua built an altar unto the **LORD GOD** of Israel
in mount **Ebal**.”

CHAPTER VIII. 30.

BEAUTIFUL, in the history of Abraham, is the frequent mention of his altars, and his prayers (Gen. xii. 7 ; xii. 8 ; xiii. 18 ; xiv. 22 ; xvii. 18 ; xviii. 23 ; xx. 17 ; xxi. 33 ; xxii. 13). His spiritual character shines forth in these his acts and utterances of devotion. Nothing of the kind is recorded of Lot, the companion of the earlier stages of his pilgrimage. The record of the setting up of Abraham's first altar is full of significance. Penetrating as far as Shechem, he makes his first halt there, on his entrance into

Canaan. There the LORD appears unto him, and covenants to give the land unto his seed. Straightway he honours the LORD by offering sacrifices. Thus was the entrance of the holy nation, represented and comprised by Abraham's household, inaugurated by the establishment of a pure worship. The building of an altar upon the receipt of that promise was a double consecration: namely, of the land that should be given to him to be the LORD's land; and of the people that should be begotten of him to be the LORD's people. Nor, when he thus practically proclaimed "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD" as the rule now established, both for the inheritance and the inheritors, was he without witnesses of his memorable act, for the Scripture emphatically notes that, "*The Canaanite was then in the land.*" * The smoke of the sacrifice ascended in their sight, telling them of the only true religion which in due time should prevail in the land, and with which their own systems were wholly at variance.

It was the will of God that that which Abraham, the father of the nation, had done at his first entrance into Canaan, the nation itself should at the same spot † repeat, and in their own persons confirm, at their first entrance as the possessors of the soil.

* As the beauty of Abraham's piety is enhanced, so is the scandal of strife among brethren intensified by the mention of the heathen neighbours who will be cognizant thereof (Gen. xiii. 7).

† Here also Jacob and his household renounced and buried their idols, when they entered Canaan, on his return from Padam-aram (Gen. xxxv. 4), though not until after a delay.

Express directions were given by Moses respecting the solemn ceremony (Deut. xi. 26—31; xxvii. 2, &c.), the due performance of which is recorded in the paragraph before us. It was to take place “*on the day when Israel should pass over Jordan*”: a charge which Joshua interprets by taking *the very first opportunity* of executing the LORD’s instructions. Accordingly, after the passing of the Jordan, no sooner are the barriers of opposition burst by the overthrow of Jericho and Ai than Joshua advances with all Israel to the appointed place.

The time is plainly marked in the narrative. After the account of the taking of Ai, the history goes on to record that “*THEN Joshua built an altar unto the LORD GOD of Israel in Mount Ebal*,” and yet so remarkable is the fact, viewed in connection with the circumstances, that bold critics have not hesitated, without any show of authority, to declare that the episode is misplaced.* Shechem was in the very heart of a country that was still in the hands of seven formidable nations. Surely, then, thou holy man of God, thou wast drowsy and confused, when thou didst narrate the matter and state that it took place at such and such a time, or at least thou wast not careful to mark the pages of thy handwriting. Let us, with our critical pen, alter thy divine utterances to suit our calculations,

* The Septuagint places it after the second verse of the ninth chapter. This position would rather aggravate than remove the difficulty.

and readjust the chronology of the events ! Nay, but not only the words of Scripture, but their very order was subject to the HOLY SPIRIT's control, and we may no more dare to tamper with the one than with the other. The gratuitous assumption that a transposition of pages in an early manuscript has taken place is a short method with a supposed difficulty, which we ought ever to be most reluctant to entertain.

The difficulty is, however, one that has met us before. It is, no doubt, a surprising thing that the Israelites, with their entire households, should be assembled at Shechem, some twenty miles from Ai, and further still from the camp at Gilgal, thus early in the campaign ; but it is not more surprising than that they should, beneath the walls of Jericho, upon their first entrance into the country, have observed the rite of circumcision, and the keeping of the Passover. Only faith could have then made them obedient: only Divine protection could have made them secure. Here also Divine authority enjoins the observance, and here also Divine protection is thereby guaranteed. When Jacob and his household, at God's command, arose and went up to Bethel to worship, "*the terror of GOD was upon the cities that were round about them, so that they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob*" (Gen. xxxv. 5). The same "*terror of GOD*" protects the sons of Jacob now. (Compare Exod. xxxiv. 24; 2 Chron. xvii. 10). It is not a little remarkable that the promise to the Israelites that the LORD their God should lay the

fear of them and the dread of them on all the land they should tread upon, was given in immediate connection with the command to take this very journey at this time to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim* (Deut. xi. 25—29).

So far from the postponement of this section mending its perfection, it would mar it altogether. It is just in its position that its beauty and its teaching lie.

Here we see the hosts of Israel, as soon as the first two terrible blows are struck, namely, at Jericho and at Ai, instead of marching on to further victories, calmly sheathing their swords. In the very heat of the conflict, when their national prospects seem to depend upon prompt and energetic action, with their wives and little ones and the strangers that were conversant among them, they wend their way to Shechem, there to keep holiday before God, to celebrate His worship, and to listen to His law.

Let us learn the lesson that to pause for prayer and for the study of the Word of God is no loss of time, nor waste of effort, but that God is thus to be honoured, even in the busiest and most anxious times. In all

* Very striking is the following observation in CROSBY'S "*Notes on Joshua*."—"If we look over the list of kings whom Joshua conquered, as given in the twelfth chapter, we find that, between Ai and the great plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel, there were *none*, showing that by some providential calamity (referred to in Deut. vii. 20, and Josh. xxiv. 12, as 'the hornet') that central portion of the land had been stripped of its inhabitants in preparation for Israel's solemn service at Ebal and Gerizim."

that we undertake, may we follow the example of Joshua and the Israelites, and begin by acknowledging God and seeking His help. What is begun with prayer will end with praise. “*In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.*”

With regard to the distance from Gilgal (ix. 6), a people who for forty years had been wont to traverse the wilderness of Sinai, would not find a march of thirty miles an insuperable difficulty. It has been conjectured that by this time Joshua had removed his camp to another point, to which the name of Gilgal was now transferred; and a village now known by the name of “Jiljilia” is pointed out as the probable site of the second Gilgal; but the arguments in favour of this conjecture are inconclusive.* The narrative furnishes no hint of a removal of the camp; nor is it probable that, though Joshua might, in obedience to the commandment of God, conduct the special pilgrimage now recorded, he would, without a divine warrant, fix his camp, and continually be leaving an unprotected multitude of women and children in the very centre of a hostile country. Faith is one matter, presumption is another.

The gathering of all Israel to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, and the celebration of God’s worship there, was a sign unto Israel of a most assuring character. When it was promised to Moses that, notwithstanding the strength of Pharaoh’s oppression, and his own

* See explanation of Deut. xi. 30, on p. 97.

natural insufficiency to rescue his afflicted countrymen, he should, nevertheless, bring them forth out of Egypt, God gave him a token by which he should recognise that God had sent him. "*When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve GOD upon this mountain.*" This was after the pattern of the tokens God gives. It was of the nature of a prophecy. The sign itself demanded an exercise of faith as much as the fact it was given to corroborate. How unlikely a thing was it, according to all human calculations, that all Israel should ever be gathered at the foot of Horeb! But when the Divine revelation was fulfilled by the fact itself, what comfort would Moses and all Israelites gather in recognising herein the warrant of the presence, the guidance, and the faithfulness of God! Just so the prophetic anticipation of the gathering of all Israel at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim was a token. "*Are they not on the other side of Jordan?*" asked the aged man of God, indicating by the light of inspiration localities his natural eye had never seen. How improbable, in the ordinary course of events, that Israel should ever reach that other side of Jordan, and land at the Gilgal of which Moses prophesied—a site as yet unnamed, as would appear (v. 9)—and, journeying westward as he described, through the champaign where the Canaanites yet dwelt, should reach the oaks of Moreh! Behold them already there! Yonder frown the bleak heights of Ebal, the mountain of the curse; and opposite, irradiated by the western sun, as

by the smile of heaven, is Gerizim, the mountain of the blessing.

Thus the token is fulfilled, and its fulfilment is a pledge of the faithfulness of God. Herein is it seen that He is with His people, and will accomplish all His promise to them. Well might Moses charge them, when they should arrive at the two mountains, to eat there and to rejoice before the **LORD** their God (Deut. xxvii. 7).

Let us now endeavour to understand the character of the ceremony performed, and to estimate the importance of the occasion. We must not for a moment suppose that we have here an account of a Levitical ceremony appointed for periodical observance. It was the one great and solemn inauguration of the possession of the land. Canaan, the scene of abominations and idolatries, was henceforth to be “THE HOLY LAND.” Therefore, before another step is taken towards the conquest, a formal dedication is made.

The view from Mount Gerizim, it is stated by travellers, is scarcely less extensive than that from Pisgah itself. “All central Palestine,” says Dr. Eder-sheim,* “lay spread like a map before the wondering gaze of Israel. Tabor, Gilboa, the hills of Galilee, rose in succession: in the far distance, snow-capped Hermon bounded the horizon, with sweet valleys and rich fields intervening. Turning to the right, they would descry the lake of Galilee, and following the cleft of the

* He refers to TRISTRAM’s “*Land of Israel*,” p. 153.

Jordan valley, they would mark beyond it Bashan, Ajalon, Gilead, and even Moab. To their left, the Mediterranean from Carmel to Gaza was full in view, the blue outline far away dimly suggesting thoughts of the isles of the Gentiles and the blessings in store for them." All the territory thus bounded was now to be declared "*the LORD'S land*," and the people now assembled upon the slopes of the confronting mountains were as a nation to avouch themselves, once and for ever, "*the LORD'S host*."

Great national covenants were made before and after this. At Sinai, and again in the land of Moab, the people had pledged themselves to serve the *LORD** (Exod. xix. 8; xxiv. 3; xxiv. 7; Deut. xxix. 1—xxxii. 6). At Gilgal they had practically consecrated themselves by the renewal of the obsolete ordinances of Circumcision and the Passover. After this time, namely, before Joshua's death, there was a second national consecration and covenant in Shechem (xxiv.) And in the later days of Israel's history, the covenant was repeated and renewed (2 Chron. xv. 12; xxiii. 16; xxix. 10; xxxiv. 31, 32; &c.); but never was there a more solemn national act of consecration than that which now, by Divine appointment, was held at Ebal and Gerizim, namely, upon Israel's entrance into

* Namely, after having heard Moses rehearse the very words of the law, namely, the blessings and the cursings, which Joshua now proclaims. See Deut. xxvii. 11, &c.; xxix. 19—21; xxx. 1, 7, 19.

Canaan. Never in the world's history was there so imposing a religious service—unless, indeed, at the giving of the decalogue at Sinai—never was there so vast a congregation assembled to listen. The natural, or, let us rather say, the providential configuration of the scene made this to be possible. Nowhere else in the wide world, it may perhaps be said, could a whole nation be congregated as in a spacious amphitheatre, and hear the words spoken. “The limestone strata,” says Captain Wilson, “running up in a succession of ledges to the top of the hills have all the appearance of benches.” Many travellers who have visited the locality attest to the wonderful acoustic properties of the valley between Ebal and Gerizim, and tell of the distinctness with which sounds are transmitted from the one to the other, notwithstanding the distance across.*

* We read how Jotham, from the top of Gerizim, addressed his parable to the men of Shechem below (Judg. ix. 7). In later times, soldiers on the hill addressed the inhabitants of the city, instigating them to insurrection. Mr. Mills records in the “*Journal of Sacred Literature*,” Oct. 1863, p. 178, an experiment he had made of the distance to which the human voice would travel at this place. “We had pitched our tent in the valley, near the foot of Gerizim, on the line between the two mountains, where I have supposed the ark stood. I clambered up Gerizim, and Mr. Williams up Ebal, Mr. Edwards remaining with the men at the tent. Having reached the lower spur, I found myself just as if I stood upon a lofty pulpit, and my friend found himself on a similar one on Ebal. Having rested ourselves a little, I opened my Bible and read the blessings in Hebrew, and every word was heard distinctly by those in the tent, as well as by Mr. Williams on Ebal. My friend then read the cursings in Welsh, and we all heard every word and syllable.”—Quoted by Dr. JAMIESON.

On the mount of blessing are ranged six tribes, and on the mount of cursing six tribes. The tribes descended from Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel, predominate upon the former, on the latter stand the tribes of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, together with those of Zebulun, Leah's youngest son, and Reuben her eldest, who by his impiety forfeited his birthright. How, in this apportioning of the positions of the tribes, do we see that, though generations pass by, the stain of wrong-doing or crooked policy is not erased. Jacob himself and his sons have long since quitted the scene of this world's works, be they good or evil; but, as the foamy wake remains in the waters, tracing the path by which the ship has passed, so glory and so gloom still linger where purity and where impurity have been, each marking the memory of each.

Let us now note the details of the ceremony enacted before the spectators, and auditors, and participators. It consisted of three observances, all of the highest moment, namely—

- I.—THE BUILDING OF AN ALTAR.
- II.—THE INSCRIBING OF THE LAW.
- III.—THE PRONOUNCING OF THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE.

The first part of the ceremony was—

I.—THE BUILDING OF AN ALTAR.

When Noah emerged from the deluge upon a new

and restored world, wherein righteousness ought to have henceforth dealt, his first act was to build an altar unto the **LORD**. When Joshua has quitted the desert and entered the promised land, he makes a like public acknowledgment of God.

The altar itself, and the sacrifices offered upon it, are alike pregnant with symbolical teaching. The altar was of whole stones whereon no tool had been lifted. This was according to the directions of the law for the construction of all stone altars (*Exod. xx. 25*. See *1 Kings xviii. 30, 31*). It would appear that the elaborate altars of shittim wood, and of brass, used in the Tabernacle and in the Temple (*Exod. xxv. 1—8*; *2 Chron. iv. 1*), were, after all, only outer cases,* enclosing such plain altars built of earth, or of unhewn stone.

Not only was the exceeding sacredness of God's worship taught by this veto upon the intrusion of human handicraft (compare *2 Sam. vi. 7*), but a further lesson was thus conveyed. What man handles, he defiles. In the work of atonement, man-made merits are a pollution. The stone cut out of the mountain

* The altar of shittim wood was made "*hollow with boards*" (*Exod. xxxviii. 7*), doubtless for this purpose. Fairbairn shews that Jewish writers have thus understood the matter. He quotes the following:—" *Altare terreum est hoc ipsum aheneum altare cuius concavum terra implebatur.*"—JARCHI, *on Exod. xxvii. 5*. Also, " *Cavitas vero altaris terra replebatur, quo tempore castra ponebant.*"—BECHAI, *on the same passage*.

without hands (Dan. ii. 34, 35) is a sufficient altar.* Let us beware, lest we mar the work of grace by mingling our own good works, our own religious observances, or our own wisdom, with God's perfect plan of salvation (Rom. iv. 5; xi. 6; 1 Cor. i. 17; ii. 2; iii. 11; Gal. iii. 3; Eph. ii. 8, 9; Phil. iii. 9).

On this altar of whole stones Joshua offered sacrifices of two kinds—"burnt offerings" and "peace offerings."

The import of the *burnt offering* was fourfold.

1. It was an expression of gratitude. When Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock to God he thereby

* Calvin deprecates this explanation, and undertakes to affirm that the Divine intention in temporary altars, whether of stone or of turf, was simply to prohibit the perpetuity of altars; and that the erection of altars of a form that would not attract veneration, or which would crumble away of themselves, gave a pre-eminence to that sanctuary that God would afterwards establish on Mount Zion. Keil is yet further from the mark when he says (whatever he may mean), "Had the stones been hewn, they would not have represented earth in its elementary state, and would not therefore have tallied with the essential meaning of an altar, since every bloody sacrifice was immediately connected with sin and death, by which man, the creature of earth, is brought to earth again." Thornley Smith reads in this restriction a veto upon meretricious ornamentation in connection with God's worship. "How false," he says, "is the character of the altars so called, elaborately wrought of the most costly marble, erected in the cathedrals of the Church of Rome!" Some, observing the paragraph (Exod. xx. 22, 23) that immediately precedes the restriction (Exod. xx. 24, 25), regard it as a preventive against idolatry; while others, again, have interpreted the use of iron implements as unfit for the preparation of altars, because they are also used for destruction as weapons of war (Compare 1 Kings vi. 7. See also 1 Chron. xxii. 8; xxviii. 3).

testified his love, and offered as a gift to God the earliest and best of all his substance.

2. But more than this was implied. He who in gratitude laid his gift to be burnt upon the altar, at the same time symbolically dedicated his own person a free-will offering to God. The victim was the substitute for the offerer, who was himself to be, as it were, consumed entirely, body, soul, and spirit in God's service. The victim died, but the worshipper himself was to remain "*a living sacrifice.*"

3. There was, however, a deeper, and more essential meaning in the burnt offering. It was not merely an expression of gratitude to God, and a pledge of entire devotion to Him, but it was an atonement, type of a greater atonement to be revealed. The blood of the victim was poured out upon the altar, foreshadowing the shedding of the precious blood of JESUS for the remission of sins.

4. Let us add that the burnt offering was an accompaniment, and a symbolical representation of the prayers of the worshipper. As the smoke of the sacrifice ascended, so there went up with it, expressed or implied, the plea for acceptance with God. Thus it is written of Abel, that "*the LORD had respect unto him, and to his offering.*"

With the burnt offerings, Joshua offered also *peace offerings*. As those were the accompaniment and representation of *Prayer*; so were these the accom-

paniment and representation of *Praise*. They were expressive of the reconciliation of the worshippers to God, of their happy communion with Him, and of their joyful recognition of His love and His help. Of the peace offerings the people might partake, gathering to the feast, like favoured guests and friends (Deut. xxvii. 7).

Such, then, is the meaning of that altar on Mount Ebal, and of the sacrifices offered thereon. All Israel worships—with supplications for the future, and thanksgiving for mercies granted. Gratitude, devotion, and gladness mingle in the holy service, and meanwhile Israel is taught, like Abraham (John viii. 56), and like Moses (John v. 46) before them, to anticipate the day of CHRIST.

And shall we, now that in the fulness of time the true sacrifice has been offered up, fall short of the example of Joshua and all Israel? May we, too, be found pleading the efficacy of the great Atonement! May the sacrifices, both of prayer and of praise, and also of a life-long consecration, be likewise our offering; and may we live rejoicing evermore, in sweet communion with God as “*accepted in the Beloved!*”

The second part of the ceremony was—

II.—THE INSCRIBING OF THE LAW.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, the inscribing of the

law is mentioned before the building of the altar, but Joshua builds the altar first. This is the true sequence. Until an atonement is provided, the law is a message of death. The pardon of sins is the starting point in the life of holiness. The writing of the law was a very impressive act. Of all the great monuments set up to mark great covenants, or to celebrate great events, none could be more markworthy. Never was a more important document lodged for the attestation of a bond than that now formally inscribed before a myriad of witnesses, and exhibited under the open heavens, imbedded upon the flanks of Mount Ebal.

Great tablets are prepared and coated with cement, which, when once hardened by the atmosphere, will transmit the inscription to future generations.* And now Joshua himself, with his own hand, standing before the assembled representatives of Israel, traces in the plaster surface the words of the law of God. We are not to suppose that Joshua simply superintended the work, deputing its execution to subordinates. No; but as each king on his entrance upon office was to write out a copy of the law, so are

* Inscriptions of the highest antiquity are found thus written upon plaster, in perfect preservation. See THOMPSON's "*The Land and the Book*," p. 417. Edersheim, however, sees a symbolic lesson in the fact that the law was written upon a comparatively perishable surface, and not upon the stones themselves. "May it not be," he says, "that this 'profession' was intended for that, rather than for all future generations? . . . Each generation must take up for itself the profession to be the LORD's."

we apparently intended to understand that Joshua himself is the writer here.

The prophets not only prophesied by their writings and their oral exhortations, but by parabolic actions taught the people. Isaiah walked half-clad and barefoot for three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and the Ethiopians; and Ezekiel lay upon his side three hundred and ninety days, and then again forty days, to signify the years of the punishment, first of the house of Israel and then of the house of Judah. Not less speaking was the now recorded action of the head of Israel. While all Israel encamps between Mount Ebal and Gerizim, day by day he is seen standing in reverent silence, graving the words of the law with an iron pen "*very plainly*"* (Deut. xxvii. 8), and then filling them in, whether with pigment or with molten lead (Job xix. 24). How long this inscription made by Joshua "*in the presence of the children of Israel*" occupied, we could conjecture with more certainty if we could precisely ascertain what it was that Joshua inscribed. Some have supposed that the writing comprised no more than the Ten Commandments; others that the 613 precepts of the law, others, again, that the Book of Deuteronomy, or even that the entire Pentateuch was written. This last hypothesis involves

* The canon of the Church of England requiring that the Ten Commandments be set up in every church and chapel is in beautiful conformity herewith. Would, however, that they were always thus written "*very plainly!*"

a palpable absurdity.* If “*the words of the law*” which Joshua wrote were the same that he read, which are also spoken of as “*the blessings and cursings*” (viii. 34), those may be right who suppose that the portion of the twenty-seventh chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy that is occupied with the denunciation of curses, and the whole of the twenty-eighth chapter was inscribed.† Still more probable is it that the monument consisted of two tablets, the one presenting the twelve curses (Deut. xxvii. 14—26), and the other, twelve corresponding blessings (Deut. xxviii. 1—14), according to the number of the tribes of Israel. Whereas, however, the exact contents of the inscription, which is designated as “*the law of Moses*,” is not to be determined, let us be content to remain in doubt, and meanwhile gather what is patent and certain, namely, that the sacrifice of prayer and praise is to be accompanied by devotion to the will of God, as expressed in His Holy Word. Oh, that this perfect law may be graven by His own hand in the fleshy tablets of our hearts!

* The absurdity is intensified by the Rabbinical tradition that Joshua wrote it in seventy languages, that all nations might read it.

† Against this conjecture see Deut. xxviii. 58, where the same phrase, “*all the words of this law*,” occurs in connection with “*this book*”—a term scarcely applicable to a stone inscription. The “*words*” of the commandment were to be written upon the door-posts and gates of the house, apparently in the summary form of Deut. vi. 5, unless the charge is entirely figurative.

III.—THE PRONOUNCING OF THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE.

The third part of the ceremony at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim is like a climax. The copy of the law now completely written, the people still standing in their appointed stations, and the ark of God being placed in the valley between them, “*all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that Moses had commanded in the book of the law*,* without the omission of one word, Joshua himself reads out before all the congregation of Israel, the Levites taking up his words and passing on the solemn clauses to the most distant hearer of all that mighty assembly (compare Josh. viii. 34, 35 with Deut. xxvii. 9 and 14). Sentence by sentence the law of God is read, first the blessing and then the curse. The blessing stands first. In the Pentateuch not so; but Joshua, a type of CHRIST, again reverses Moses’ order (see above, p. 196). Then are the *Canaanitish* sins that have hitherto defiled the land denounced—namely, idolatry, dishonour of parents, dishonesty, deceit, oppression, uncleanness of every kind, malice, murder, and disobedience to the law of God.

How searching is this last particular! Who can say “*Amen!*” hereto, without slaying, in that assent,

* The unsolved question as to what that phrase “*all the law of Moses*” includes, recurs here, but does not interfere with the instruction.

his own self-righteousness? We have not, it may be, fallen into the excessive and open outrages of the heathen, but who has confirmed "*all the words of this law*" by his own continued practice (Gal. iii. 10)? May we not, then, choose this and reject that, according to our own wisdom or will? Nay, but Joshua shuns not to declare all the counsel of God; be it a blessing or be it a curse, all must be faithfully proclaimed. Ah! what hope could a poor child of man have, were it not that there, by the side of him, who in God's stead declares His law—holy, just, and good—the altar yet stands on which the burnt offerings and the peace offerings have been sacrificed, telling of Him Who has borne in the sinner's stead the curse of the broken law?

Note, that as no omission is permitted in the proclamation, so no exception is allowed in the congregation. "*ALL Israel*" is addressed. "*ALL the people*" are to say, "*Amen.*" Even the strangers among them are called to attend. All are to be present to hear the reading of the words of the law. None are accounted of too high a dignity to bow to God's authority, none are esteemed too insignificant. The voices of the women and the children must join with those of the men in the general response that echoes like a peal of thunder through the vale. Alas! it is not the women and children, it is the men themselves who too often, now-a-days, absent themselves from the worship of their God, and the hearing of His law. Let us all gather at His feet. We are all concerned: let

none be omitted, whatever their lot or their degree. Here in the Gospel is warning for *every one*, here is teaching for *every one*: Oh, that *every one* might be presented perfect in CHRIST JESUS (Col. i. 28)!

As it was then, so is it now: the Gospel is like a two-edged sword. Behold the *goodness* and *severity* of God! His Word is either "*a savour of life unto life*," or "*a savour of death unto death*." See! "*Blessing and cursing*" are set before us: "*life and good, and death and evil*" (Deut. xxx. 15, 19). Men would separate God's two messages, and accept the one and *reject* the other. The promises of mercy they welcome, but warnings of wrath to come they will not hear. They are ready to take their stand upon Mount Gerizim, and say "*Amen*" to all the sweet beatitudes of the Gospel: preachers who tell them of good things to come are acceptable with them; but if faithful Levites repeat the awful threats of judgment upon the disobedient, they are counted as troublers of Israel. Nay: these two aspects of God's truth cannot be parted. The God of love is also the God of justice. Though He is "*merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*," yet "*His name is Jealous*," and "*He will by no means clear the guilty*." Both the blessing and the curse were written very plainly upon tables in Mount Ebal: both were spoken with an audible voice: to both all the people were commanded to say "*Amen*." Nor under the Gospel dispensation is either set aside.

Only in the new Jerusalem shall there be “*no more curse.*”

Stupendous as was this assembly of all Israel ranged on the mount of the blessing, and the mount of the curse, a yet vaster congregation will one day be gathered, when, at the summons of the greater Joshua, all nations shall stand before Him. In that day will there be no altar,—no sacrifice for sin. The offer of salvation through the Lamb of God will no more be repeated. The proclamation of the law of God will then have ceased, and the books of judgment will be opened. Then, also, will there be a division of man from his fellow-man, into two great companies, not as here, simply to pronounce, but to experience, the one the blessing and the other, alas! the curse—“*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.*”





LECTURE XII.

THE LORD'S HOST DECEIVED; OR, THE LEAGUE WITH THE GIBEONITES.

“And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.”

CHAPTER IX. 14.



HOW fitful are the spirits of men! What opposite passions alternate in the same breasts! In the former chapter we saw the Canaanites as still as a stone, while Israel was celebrating the worship of God at Ebal and Gerizim. The beginning of the present chapter reveals a movement among them throughout the whole land. Recovering from the panic that possessed them, they gather themselves together in

a mighty confederation, pledging themselves to a united attack upon Joshua and Israel. No less than six of the seven Canaanitish nationalities are represented.*

We are reminded, in passing, of the banding of the kings of the earth together in their impotent rage against the Messiah. This union of the whole force of Canaan was but a type of that opposition which is exerted by this world, and the prince of this world, against the Joshua of the New Testament, and against all the Israel of God.

While this general movement is on foot, it may be before any formal league of union is struck, the Gibeonites, "*they, too,*" take measures for an alliance,

* With regard to the Gergashites, who are not mentioned here, various conjectures have been put forth. They are omitted in nine out of ten enumerations of the Canaanitish nations, and there the Hivites are omitted. Thus some have supposed the Gergashites and Hivites to be but different branches of the same family. Joshua includes them with the nations that fought against and were delivered into the hand of Israel after they had crossed the Jordan (xxiv. 11). With this mention of them, the tradition of their flight to Africa does not seem quite to accord. Procopius tells of a monument found at Tingis (Tangier), consisting of two columns, containing the inscription, "We are they that fled from the face of Jesus, the robber, the son of Naue," which many have supposed to be a relic of the Gergashite refugees. But doubt has been cast upon Procopius' story, which no other author has confirmed. We may, however, remark, that it was declared not only that the Canaanites should be *destroyed*, but also that they should be *driven out* before Israel. The notion of the migration of the Gergashites seems to be founded on their being omitted from the list of those to be utterly destroyed (Deut. xx. 17). Such positive inferences, from the silence of Scripture, must be taken *for as much as they are worth.*

but an alliance of another kind.* Instead of holding themselves in readiness to co-operate with the rest of the Hivites, to which nation they themselves belonged, the four cities—Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim,† all of which seem to have been governed by an oligarchy that had its seat at Gibeon,‡ combine in a scheme of self-preservation, which was as cautiously conceived, as it was adroitly carried out.

These cities, it must be noted, lay next in order of march after Ai. Thus the Gibeonites, who had heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and unto Ai, knew that he would reach them next, and that therefore their own destruction was imminent, unless by some device it might be averted.

The narrative graphically sets forth the details of the wily plot, stating how they came to the camp at Gilgal with worn-out garments and accoutrements, patched shoes, wine-skins torn and bandaged, and provisions dry and spotted with mould, disguised

* In this expression, "*they, too, did work wily*," which is the equivalent for the original, some have seen an allusion to the ruse adopted by the Israelites at Ai; others to the wily working of Simeon and Levi, against the early Hivites at Shechem. Both explanations seem less satisfactory than that we have adopted.

† The sites of all these towns have been identified. Their modern names are El-Jib, Kefir, El-Bireh, Kuriyet el Enab. The city of wine, Kirjath-Jearim, is the same place elsewhere called Kirjath-Baal, or Baalah, or Baalah-Jehudah.

‡ For Gibeon is spoken of as being equal to a royal city (x. 2); and (if there be any truth in the midst of a tissue of lies), the ambassadors do not speak of their "king;" but of their "senate and their countrymen" (ix. 11).

as weary travellers, and pretending to have come hundreds of miles as ambassadors. We have already seen in the story of Rahab (ii. 10) that the Canaanites were acquainted with the contents of the law of God respecting their own sentence of destruction, and thus these men were well aware that a covenant of peace was, according to the terms of this law, out of the question, in the case of any of the seven nations of Canaan (see Deut. xx. 15), and hence their repeated declaration that they be come "*from a very far country*," in connection with their petition for a league of peace.

Suspicions cross the minds of some of the twelve princes who have accompanied Joshua to the reception of the pretended ambassadors from over the borders, but when these suspicions are mentioned, instead of contradicting them, which would only have led to a closer inquiry, the Gibeonites turn from their interrogators to Joshua, and bowing, doubtless, to him with an air of lowly condescension, they say, "*We be thy servants.*" One would have thought that Joshua's two straightforward, soldier-like, short questions would have left them no escape, "*Who are ye?*" and "*Whence come ye?*" But, again, they deftly evade detection by the same vague and general designation, "*From a very far country*," following up this very suspicious and unsatisfactory reply, by such professions of courtesy, and humility, and faith in the God of Israel as were calculated to divert the minds of their

observers from their own misgivings and their own investigations, and to beget favour and confidence. Without pausing to allow an opportunity for the renewal of Joshua's question, the ragged and dusty diplomats refer, with wary words and studied negligence, to the plagues of Egypt, and the recent conquests of Sihon and Og across the Jordan: but to Israel's latest victories at Jericho and Ai they make no allusion. Of the miraculous passage of the Jordan they seem unaware, as though the report of these new events had not yet reached them in their "*very far country.*" Having thus put the princes of the congregation off their guard, they dispel all remaining hesitation by giving them ocular demonstration of the truth of the story, by pointing apologetically to their rent bottles, their mouldy bread, their threadbare clothes, and broken shoes.

Convinced by the apparent candour of the petitioners; complimented by their courteous, submissive, and at the same time dignified address; satisfied by their pious reference to the LORD GOD of Israel, and confirmed in their confidence by the way-worn appearance of the supposed ambassadors, the princes "*took of their victuals.*" The full token of a compact would have been to have eaten of their bread, as Jacob and Laban ate together upon the heap of stones at Mizpeh, when they covenanted together (Gen. xxxi. 46); but the provisions being stale and unfit for food, the men simply take of their victuals, which was sufficient to symbolize the covenant

of salt. The notion that underlies this token is that those who eat of one loaf are brethren of one house, and, therefore, bound to live in unity. So, then, a formal treaty is made “*to let them live;*” sacrifices are offered, each party passing between the pieces of the divided victim* (Jer. xxxiv. 18; Gen. xv. 10, 17); and an oath of peace is passed in the name of “*the LORD GOD of Israel,*” in which Joshua himself and all the princes of the congregation pledge themselves.

And now the army of Israel may no longer tarry in the camp. They have led their households with them to Shechem, and have escorted them back again to Gilgal, and the time has come to prosecute the war; accordingly, they plan that their next march shall be against the cities of Gibeon.

May we not well imagine how high the spirits of the men of war would rise with expectation of these goodly cities that lay in the centre of the country. In their journey to Shechem they had seen something of this region and of its fertility, but now, thought they, they were to become the possessors through God’s promised gift. How sweet was the prospect, after these forty years of their pilgrimage, to return to the loved pastoral life of their forefathers, and to have each one his own inheritance. At Ai they had enriched themselves with

* “For the word used for to *make* a league has the sense, to *divide*, or *cut in pieces*.”—MASIUS. The idea seems to be that each pledging party invoked his own death, as he passed through the portions of the slain beast, should he break his bond.

much goodly spoil, but what would it be when they reached the cities of the opulent Gibeonites !

Three days intervene between the striking of the league with the false ambassadors and the arrival of the army of the Israelites at the four cities of the Gibeonites, when the Israelites are informed that the ambassadors from "*the very far country*" are their nearest neighbours, the inhabitants of the land. Now too late are Joshua's questions answered—"Who are ye?" "*Whence come ye?*"

Some authors have ascribed the vexation which arose amongst the congregation at the detection of the ruse to the high motive of devotion to the will of God, and a wholesome regard to the dire consequences of disobedience;* or at least to an uneasy anticipation of the evils of a disaffected nationality within their promised inheritance. Without contradicting these charitable estimates, it is more natural to regard the murmurs against the princes as a burst of disappointment at the apprehended forfeiture of the property that would have come into their hands, and which God had assigned to them; which seemed to have been pledged away by the oath so incautiously made. One

* Thus SAURIN says: "Pourquoi l'assemblée murmura-t-elle, lorsqu'on eût découvert la ruse de Gabaonites, si ce n'est parce qu'elle craignit, que l'alliance, qu'on avait traitée avec eux, étant une infraction directe de la loi qui ordonnait de les détruire, n'attirât sur les Israelites les mêmes fleaux, que DIEU leur avait envoyé pour punir le crime d'Achan?"—*Discours Historiques*, vol. iii. p. 108.

cannot expect to find the highest motives prevailing in a mixed multitude. Principle may, indeed, be at the bottom of an outcry of popular indignation, but it is more commonly interest that finds expression thus.

The commotion of the congregation is, however, settled with a wisdom that we doubt not was given of God in the dilemma. A compromise is effected which meets the case. The covenant was, after all, not an alliance, but simply "*to let them live*," and beyond that condition the princes will not go. The possession of their cities, the main cause of the murmurs of the people, is not conceded to them, after their fraud (xviii. 25—28), though for awhile they are left there (x. 4), until the distribution of the land; nor, again, shall the real danger of their presence in the land be left possible. They shall not be permitted to maintain their former idolatries,* and so become a snare to Israel, but shall be a caste of wood-cutters and water-carriers for the *congregation*,† that is, for the nation in its character as the Church of God. They are to serve at the altar of the LORD.

* Contrast with this holy intolerance of a false religion the spurious charity of modern times, which will not only allow liberty of conscience, but will even, from the public funds, endow the priests of error, and extend to them every facility for the propagation of their soul-destroying system.

† It is noticeable that this name for the nation, one that occurs frequently in the Pentateuch, should be resumed in this chapter (see viii. 35), namely, after the account of the general assembly at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim—an incidental confirmation of the order of events as given in our Bibles.—See pp. 183—185.

“In the place which He shall choose,” says the inspired author, for it was not yet revealed to him what should be the future site of the sanctuary. It turned out that Gibeon itself was one of the chosen spots, for there the Tabernacle stood in the reigns of David and of Solomon* (1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40; xxi. 29; 2 Chron. i. 3; 1 Kings iii. 4). The ark, too, was lodged at Kirjath-jearim, another of the Gibeonite cities, after its return from the Philistines, until David brought it to Jerusalem (1 Sam. vii. 1). Of the other places chosen of God for His worship, previous to the choice of the holy hill of Zion, Shiloh was the most celebrated (xviii. 1).

The sacrifices, especially at the great festivals, would require large quantities of wood; and water would be equally needful for the many ceremonial ablutions, and for the necessary cleansing of the place of the slaying of the sacrifices; † thus we can understand that a large staff of menials would find ample employment in the drudgery assigned to the Gibeonites. There is little doubt but that the Nethinim mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were the descendants of the Gibeonites. In Joshua’s denunciation of these men, and in the servile tasks assigned

* It was probably removed there after the destruction of Nob by Saul; at all events, it remained there until the Temple was built.

† The whole neighbourhood of Gibeon was well watered (Jer. xli. 12. RITTER, vol. iii. p. 231); while Kirjath-jearim signifies the “city of forests.” Thus the region was suited for the place of a sanctuary.

to them, was fulfilled the ancient prophecy of Noah,* “*Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren*” (Gen. ix. 25).

Such is the story of the league with the Gibeonites : and now, what are its lessons ?

The conduct of both parties was reprehensible in one way, and in another way commendable. Let us, then, study first that of the Israelites ; and then that of the Gibeonites, and find in each both a *Warning* and an *Example*.

I.—THE CONDUCT OF THE ISRAELITES ; or,— *A Warning.*

The Israelites took of the victuals of the would-be legates, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD. Now the making of that league was a solemn matter. God was appealed to as witness of the bond. It was of perpetual obligation. It involved not those who made it alone, but, whereas they were the heads of the tribes, the whole nation was concerned. A sense of the gravity of the question, and the responsibility of those who decided it, transpires in the hesitation of the princes, and in Joshua’s pointed questions. And yet with unaccountable precipitance, the oracle of God is not consulted. This was a resort always open. This was what Joshua had been especially charged to do in all

* Not but that there may be other fulfilments of Noah’s imprecation, as, for instance, in the slavery of the negroes in later days.

doubtful cases. He was to stand before Eleazar the priest, who should inquire for him, “*after the judgment of Urim before the LORD*” (whatever that may have been). Then the response would have been authoritative: then their course would have been evident.

1. Instead of this, Joshua and the princes trusted the word of man. How could they offer an affront to the supposed representatives of a foreign power? Should the embassy go home and tell their senate that they were kept waiting for an answer, and that their word was discredited? Truly, in some matters, it is better to risk being deceived than to wound the feelings of some deserving petitioner by a harsh refusal; but this was a case when some confirmation of the story should have been obtained before concluding the treaty. It is one thing to be suspicious and inaccessible, and another to be credulous. In this world, where all are, by nature, liars, it will not do to believe every tale of every stranger.

2. The princes relied upon their own discernment. They were unwilling, in the presence of these strangers, and in the presence of their commander, to confess themselves at a loss, and that they could do nothing without humbly carrying the matter to God, and praying for guidance. Ah! it is thus with us now: in the pride of our hearts, we think we can dispose affairs for ourselves: and walking in our own wisdom, we fall in our folly. Like little children, who take sharp tools into their own hands, and do but wound themselves

through their want of skill, so we injure ourselves by our presumption. Does any one think that he has a quick eye, and that he can distinguish an honest man from a knave, when he sees him and talks with him? Is your own penetration your sure oracle? Truly it may serve you in good stead, but let such a one know that there be wolves that can slip themselves into sheep's clothing so neatly, and can bleat so naturally, that you will be more than a man if you find them out. They will watch your eye as these Gibeonites watched Joshua's, and elude your searching glance. Will any one pretend that his insight into men and their motives is keener than that of Joshua and the twelve heads of the tribes of Israel?

3. Appearances were in favour of the artifice. It was by the deception of the eye that man first fell: nor has this source of illusion ceased to operate from that day. Let us be on our guard lest outward appearances beguile us. Even the holy and wise Samuel was like to have made a mistake hereby in a weighty matter, had not the voice of God spoken to him in his ear, and bidden him look beneath the surface (1 Sam. xvi. 7). This was the fault of the Pharisees (John vii. 24). *Nimium ne crede colori!* is a caution of daily application. "All is not gold that glitters," says the proverb: nor is all that is "*old and clouted*" from "*a very far country*." There be those who to the present day fabricate old relics and antiquities to deceive. There be lying Gibeonites among us still, with less excuse

than those of old. Let us beware of their plausible dissimulations and impersonations.

So, then, the tongue of our fellow-man is no sure warrant: the judgment of the wisest may fail as a criterion of truth: nor does the surface of things always indicate their actual nature. There is only One Who can see through all deceits and disguises. It is passing strange that the princes of Israel should actually have uttered their misgivings as to the genuineness of the Gibeonites' story, and yet should have rested content, although the groundlessness of those misgivings was never proved. If in any matter under consideration there arises a secret feeling that all is not right, a conscientious scruple, a reasonable doubt, or a whisper of the SPIRIT of GOD, let us beware how we allow that inward monition to be silenced. It is a call, if we would so esteem it, to lay our plans anew before our Heavenly FATHER, and to ask His guidance.

This, then, is the first lesson that we learn from Israel's conduct. Let us beware that we neglect not to inquire at the mouth of the LORD in all we undertake. If we submit every matter before Him in prayer, and search the Scriptures daily for instruction, we shall not be left without the discovery of the path of evident duty in every perplexed question.

In Israel's case, the pernicious results of neglecting the oracle of God were reduced to the smallest possible dimensions, by the wisdom granted to Joshua and his cabinet, in dealing with the difficulty; but who shall

tell of the miserable consequences of restrained prayer, and an unopened bible? A disastrous league with the enemies of God, and evils untold will follow. “*Send out*” then, O our God, “*Thy light and Thy truth, and they shall lead us!*”

II.—THE CONDUCT OF THE ISRAELITES; or,— *An Example.*

If the conduct of the Israelites was reprehensible, and herein suggests a warning, it was also in another way commendable, and herein presents an example, namely, of fidelity to a pledge given.

Now, the promise to spare the Gibeonites was obtained upon the distinct understanding that the men had been sent from “*a very far country.*” With any other nations than those so situated, the Israelites, as we have seen, were forbidden to make any covenant. On both these grounds many have argued not only that the oath was not binding, but that it was even wrong to have kept it.* Clearly, however, Joshua and the princes acted according to the will of God in the matter. Imperative as was the order to destroy the Canaanites, it was nevertheless *a special enactment* and not *a moral duty*.

* CALVIN goes so far as to say that “they twice profaned the name of God, while under pretence of the oath; they persevered in defending what they had foolishly promised.”

SAURIN, quoting Barbeyrac’s opinion, supposes that God, by some manifest revelation not recorded, ratified the oath, and so warranted its observance.

binding at all times, like the laws of purity, honesty, and truth. The moral duty then, namely, to keep faith, and particularly with men outside the commonwealth of Israel, and in a case in which the honour of the name of God Himself was involved, evidently over-rides the special and temporary enactment to destroy the Canaanites.

But will not the curse pronounced upon these Canaanites now fall upon Israel? If they let go out of their hand men whom God has appointed to utter destruction, will not their life and their people go for the life and the people of those whom they have delivered? No: for this curse Joshua throws back upon the heads of the Gibeonites, who, by their fraud, elicited the pledge.

Let us learn, then, that, even if we be deceived, we are yet bound to keep our plighted word. No subsequent discovery of the sacrifice of our own temporal interest involved thereby will justify us in breaking faith. If this be the mind and will of God, what shall be said of those, who think that a mental reservation will make an oath invalid, or that an oath made to a heretic may be broken without sin? This account of the faithfulness of the Israelites is a practical commentary in anticipation of the inspired description of the citizen of Zion, "*He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*"

When we reach the tenth chapter we shall see how the Israelites not only refrained from lifting their own

hands to destroy the Gibeonites, but that in respect of their oath they, with all their might, came to rescue them from the combined armies that gathered against them. We will not, however, anticipate our study of the continuation of the narrative by further reflections on the nobility of Israel's conduct.

Leaving this side of our subject for the present, let us now dwell upon—

III.—THE CONDUCT OF THE GIBEONITES; or,— *A Warning.*

Nothing whatever can justify a lie. These men professed to honour the God of Israel. Did they not know that He is a God of truth? Why did they seek, by serpentine craft, to circumvent His chosen instruments, and by lies to thwart the course of Divine judgment? Why did they not throw themselves at His feet, and cry to Him in dust and ashes for the pardon of their sins; and then approach Joshua and the princes of Israel and lay down their arms, and wait the will of God? Would they have been received? We believe, assuredly, that thus their suit would have prevailed. But was it not expressly forbidden to the Israelites to make a covenant with any of the seven nations of Canaan? (Exod. xxiii. 32; xxxiv. 12; Deut. vii. 2). It was: but this would have been a

different case to that contemplated in the veto of the law, the spirit of which was to forbid the toleration of idolaters as such. Clearly, the renunciation of their idolatry would have removed them from the category of those whose utter destruction the law contemplated: for the terms of the commandment as first given are, "*Thou shalt make no covenant with them, NOR WITH THEIR GODS;*" and, wherever this commandment is found, these *gods* are mentioned as the source of danger. The question may then arise, Why was not the order to destroy the Canaanites given in a conditional form? If repentance and prayer would have prevailed, why is not this expressly intimated?* In His omniscience God foresaw that no penitent suit for peace would ever be tendered: nay, more, in His wrath He had determined that there should not. These Canaanites were by this time given over to judicial blindness and to a reprobate mind, that so their appointed doom might come upon them. It was impossible to renew them again to repentance. Blind fury and blank despair are the only possible alternatives, now that the grace of God is withdrawn from them. Therefore it is that no provision is made in the law for the case of a humble petition for pardon from God, and for peace with His people Israel. The Scripture plainly intimates that

* There was mercy in the omission of any saving clause in the law. It was the very desperateness of their case that brought the Gibeonites to devise plans for safety. Who shall tell how many have been driven to anxious inquiry by those severer aspects of the Gospel, which some would fain smooth away?

had any of the nations taken this course they would have found favour, and would not have been destroyed (xi. 19, 20).* Instead of this, the only right method, the Gibeonites adopt tricks and artifices. Therefore does Joshua curse them: therefore are they driven from their houses, their honour, and their liberty, and made to bow the neck as drudges of the humblest degree. "*Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD.*"

No man may say that the end will justify the means. Let Christians reflect that they are children of the light, and of the day, and leave it to the sons of the father of lies to prevaricate and to dissemble. A speedy discovery, and a lasting penalty, overtook the lying Gibeonites; nor will nineteenth century deceivers escape either detection or degradation. Here, on earth, they will be despised; and hereafter all liars shall have their portion in the lake of fire. What supposed necessity, what seeming advantage, can outweigh this fearful penalty?

* Compare the case of Pharaoh and the Israelites. If Pharaoh had ceded the moderate petition for a three days' journey into the wilderness, the Exodus would not have come to pass. His refusal of this short leave of absence, and his aggravated oppression, constituted a full justification of the Israelites in their prosecution of the effort towards a permanent emancipation. Thus Pharaoh himself brought about the accomplishment of that full blessing, which God had promised. See also Deut. ii. 24, 26—36.

This is the course of every vessel of wrath fitted to destruction. God is justified in judging the wicked, for they, by their own persistent hostility, and resistance of His will, and disregard of His long-suffering patience, become, by their own act and deed, responsible for their own ruin.

IV.—THE CONDUCT OF THE GIBEONITES; or,—

An Example.

If the conduct of the Gibeonites was, in respect of their falsehood, reprehensible, it was also in another respect commendable, and constitutes a striking example. For what was their end in view? Was it not the deliverance of their fellow-citizens and clansmen? And was it not faith that led them to anticipate the certain course of the revealed purpose of God, and therefore to desire the protection that an alliance with Israel would ensure? Because this faith and this object were right, although their method in obtaining their purpose was crooked; therefore, in the midst of the curse there is a blessing that outweighs it. They were indeed made to serve in wearisome toil, but it was at the altar of the God of all the earth. Oh! honourable drudgery, far above the highest dignity of their former estate among the royal cities of Canaan, when idolatry and every abomination were rife (Ps. lxxxiv. 10).

With what an argument does the narrative of these poor Gibeonites appeal to unsaved sinners of every age. Would that such would follow their example! The avenging armies of the LORD of hosts are nigh at hand. Thousands of lost souls have already perished in their sins, and are even now groaning in the pit of eternal woe. Thousands are on their way to a like destruction. With each unsaved one we would plead and say,

Acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace. Join not the confederacy of His enemies. Oh ! hearken to the Gospel message. See the heralds stand, extending the olive-branch and beseeching thee in God's name to be reconciled to Him. With more light than the Canaanites, thou art more responsible. Against thee is no decree of unsparing extermination passed. With thee the covenant of mercy is not forbidden. There is no need for subterfuges and evasions. Come, confess thyself a sinner and accept the proffered grace of God. The terms of a lasting treaty of alliance are already drawn up—yea, and sealed with blood. The promise and the oath of God are pledged.

In the case of the Gibeonites, Saul, backward to slay the Amalekites whom God had sentenced to destruction, was forward to slay the descendants of these Gibeonites with whom a perpetual covenant of peace had been made; but no cruel Saul can violate the security of those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel. The LORD will not break His covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of His lips. "*He is faithful that promised.*" The HOLY GHOST incline each heart to seek the God of all mercies, and repenting truly of sins past, to sue for peace and safety in the merits of JESUS, the sinners' Friend !

In the great judgment-day, when all men shall rise to give an account of the deeds done in the body, when the earnest Queen of the South, and the repentant men *of Nineveh* shall be called as witnesses against the

indifferent and the impenitent, will not these anxious though erring Gibeonites also be there, not then cursed, but blessed in the heavenly Joshua, their base disguises exchanged for robes of righteousness, through the efficacy of the One Sacrifice to which their compulsory ministry prepared the way, and will they not rise up in judgment against this generation?

Let us close our present study by transcribing Newton's simple, but admirable rendering of the lessons of the league with the Gibeonites:—

When Joshua, by God's command,
Invaded Canaan's guilty land,
Gibeon, unlike the nations round,
Submission made, and mercy found.

Their stubborn neighbours, who, enraged,
United war against them waged,
By Joshua soon were overthrown,
For Gibeon's cause was now their own.

He from whose arm they ruin feared,
Their leader and ally appeared;
An emblem of the Saviour's grace,
To those who humbly seek His face.*

* “Joshua marches all night and fights all day for the Gibeonites: they took not so much pains in coming to deceive him as he in going to deliver them. . . . If his own Israelites had been in danger, he could have done no more. God and His Joshua makes no difference between Gibeonites, Israelites, and His own natural people. All are Israelites whom He hath taken to league. . . . As these Hivites could never be thankful enough to such a Joshua, no more can we to so gracious a Redeemer, Who, forgetting our [un]worthiness, descended to our Gibeon, and rescued us from the powers of hell and death.”—Bp. HALL.

The men of Gibeon wore disguise,
And gained their peace by framing lies ;
For Joshua had no power to spare,
If he had known from whence they were.

But JESUS invitations sends,
Treating with rebels as His friends,
And holds the promise forth in view
To all who for His mercy sue.

Too long His goodness I disdained,
Yet went at last and peace obtained ;
But soon the noise of war I heard,
And former friends in arms appeared.

Weak in myself, for help I cried,
LORD, I am pressed on every side ;
The cause is Thine, they fight with me,
But every blow is aimed at Thee.

With speed to my relief He came,
And put my enemies to shame ;
Thus saved by grace I live to sing
The love and triumphs of my King.





LECTURE XIII.

THE LORD FIGHTING FOR HIS HOST; OR, THE KINGS OF CANAAN SMITTEN.

“And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the **LORD** hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the **LORD** fought for Israel.”

CHAPTER x. 14.

DARKER and darker grow the prospects of the Canaanites. The fall of Jericho was attended by such circumstances of terror as must have caused the whole land to tremble. The momentary victory of the men of Ai was followed by a fearful defeat and destruction. And now a new and an alarming token comes to light. A great confederacy of all the nationalities had been formed, and they were already mustering their forces for a united attack upon Joshua and Israel, resolved to crush with one blow the power

that threatened to swallow them up, when the news is brought to Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, the head of the southern section of Canaan, that the four cities of the Gibeonites have made peace with Israel. Had some petty principality thus submitted it had been a matter of little moment: but Gibeon was “*as one of the royal cities, and all the men thereof were mighty.*”

When Adonizedek hears it, fear mingles with fury in his breast—fear of Israel’s advance—fury against the Gibeonite deserters. A decided blow must now be struck, or all is gone. Wherefore he sends to the four nearest kingdoms of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon,* that is, to the princes who shared with him in the government of the south of Canaan: “*Come up,*” he says, “*and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua, and with the children of Israel.*”

Thus, in the providence of God, was the strength of Canaan divided. But for this proposal of Adonizedek to punish Gibeon, the whole confederation of north and south Canaan would have marched in countless hosts against the Israelites. As it was, the Israelites were encouraged by the conquest of the five kings to meet

* All these towns have been identified, and are indicated now in the maps—Hebron as El Khulil, *the friend*, that is, the city of Abraham, the friend of God. Jarmuth is represented by the village Yarnuk. Lachish is probably the same place now known as Um-Lakis, a site between Gaza and Beit Jibrin. Eglon still retains the name in the form “Aiglan,” where ruins indicate a former city.

Jabin and the northern army,* whose defeat is recorded in the eleventh chapter.

The name, "Adonizedek"—"Lord of Righteousness," recalls that of "Melchizedek"†—"King of Righteousness;" but though the names of these two men are similar, and though both ruled over the same city, Salem, or Jerusalem, or Jebus, how unlike is their conduct! The one goes forth to meet Abraham with a blessing; the other is filled with dismay and with indignation, because there are found those who make peace with Abraham's sons. But Melchizedek's blessing shall prevail above Adonizedek's wrath.

The policy of Adonizedek was to strike terror into all deserters, by making a notable example in the chastisement of the Gibeonites, little expecting it would appear that not only the Gibeonites but the Israelites themselves would encounter them at Gibeon.

Let us pause to reflect upon the analogy suggested. It is thus in the spiritual life. Upon no outer enemy does the world turn with such rage and resentment as upon those who desert their ranks to join the LORD's host. All the legions of Hell are marshalled forth against the young believer who has newly signed the terms of treaty with the Joshua of the better covenant.

* Calvin enlarges upon this manifestation of the paternal care of God for His people in thus dividing their enemies. See his note on xi. 1.

† The variation in the name, which was a title and not a personal appellative, marks a change of dynasty since Abraham's day.

As Bishop Hall says, “If a convert come home, the angels welcome him with songs, the devils follow him with uproar and fury, his old partners with scorn and obloquy.” In spite of all this, let not those who have become allied to the Israel of God quail; but let the sequel here before us reassure them.

The five armies arrive at Gibeon, and encamp before it, and, concentrating their attack, seem like to lay the city level with the ground; but meanwhile a courier has been despatched to the camp of Israel at Gilgal, with an urgent summons. In a few short sentences the emergency is stated: “*Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us.*”

Christian, is it going hard with thee in the conflict with thy spiritual foes? Do difficulties and dangers hem thee in on every side, and threaten to overwhelm thee? But the gate of prayer is still open and unobstructed as ever, and thou canst send a petition to the camp of the spiritual Joshua.* Observe the earnestness and the confidence expressed by the Gibeonites in their message. Translate their cry for succour into such language as will suit thy own distress: let thy petition go forth winged with faith in the covenant of grace, and thou shalt soon see how the Captain of thy salvation will command deliverances for thee.

* “*Prayer is that postern gate which is left open, even when the city is straitly besieged by the enemy.*”—SPURGEON on Ps. xviii. 6.

Now, had the Israelites been disposel to evade their pledge with the Gibeonites, here was a specious pretext for doing so. They might have answered, "See how, although by falsehood ye succeeded in entangling us, yet vengeance suffereth you not to live. God Himself hath taken the matter up, and even if we may not lift our hand to cut you off, your own countrymen are now His instruments to destroy you. All that we covenanted was to let you live: to go to war ourselves in your behalf we never promised." Nay, but they did not thus lightly estimate the sacredness of the LORD's oath, nor the claims involved in a covenant of peace with Israel. Joshua held himself as much bound to fight for Gibeon as to refrain from destroying it himself. "That good man," to quote Bishop Hall again, "knew little difference between killing the Gibeonites with his own sword, and the sword of an Amorite. . . . Even permission in those things we may remedy makes us no less actors than consent: some men kill as much by looking on as by smiting. We are guilty of all the evil we might have hindered." (Compare Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.)

But let us note, not only the nobility of this acknowledgment of the claims of the new allies, but also the promptitude and energy with which their rescue is undertaken. How many good resolves are marred and made of none effect by lack of decision in their execution. We rest in the thought of our noble plans, and meanwhile we hesitate and defer to

carry them out in the performance : thus the evils we might have stayed grow beyond control : the opportunity has sped away ; the hearts of those who looked for our help are sick with hopes long deferred. Too late, too late ! is the disappointed cry with which they greet our tardy steps. The distance between Gilgal * and Gibeon was some twenty miles. Without delay, Joshua accomplishes the entire march during that night, taking with him all the rank and file, and all the distinguished officers. The five kings reckoned that Joshua was away at Gilgal, there waiting, as they thought, until by all Jabin's hosts, acting in concert with their own, he and his Israelitish tribes should be driven back into the Jordan, over which they had crossed. But when the morning breaks, lo ! Joshua suddenly confronts them, with all Israel at his feet.

Not, however, in his own strength had Joshua come, for God had stayed his heart by a sure word of encouragement spoken to him by the way.† “ *Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thy hand : there shall not a man of them stand before thee.*” This was the very same word with which God had, in the first instance, encouraged him to cross the Jordan (i. 5, 9). Believe it, Christian soldier, wherever duty calls thee, God, as here to Joshua, says to thee, “ Fear not ! ” and assures thee that no weapon formed against thee shall prosper.

* See page 97, note.

† See pages 15, 16.

What was the result of Joshua's exhibition? Shall we say that he was victorious? This is not the way in which the story must be worded. The Scripture, on the contrary, expressly marks God's hand, telling us that "*The LORD discomfited the Canaanites before Israel.*" To make it more evident that Israel's success that day was due to the fact that "*The LORD fought for Israel,*" two notable miracles attested God's direct intervention.

As to these two miracles, about which there has been much discussion among Biblical students, let us plainly state that we are old-fashioned enough to believe that the Bible is neither a book of legends and old wives' fables; nor a book of oriental hyperboles; nor a book of problems for inventive minds to solve; but that it is a book of simple and sober truth, which means what it says, neither more or less. We receive, then, these two miracles without any hesitation, as miracles indeed, and not as some men tell us they are, mere ordinary occurrences clothed in heroic diction.*

1. First there was the miracle of great stones cast down from heaven, which are also called hailstones. Awful as was the hail of Egypt, which smote both man

* We have often been struck with the arbitrariness and unfairness of rationalistic and sceptical writers. They begin by an assumption that the facts are historically true as recorded; and upon this assumption, as upon a solid rock, they plant the lever of their verifying faculty in order to destroy what does not please them. The fact that they have such data at all should silence them. The myths of heathendom afford no such criteria. There all is loose and shifting.

and beast, and brake every tree of the field, the like of which was never before seen in Egypt, when the fire of the lightnings ran along the ground, this storm of hail was not less so, for "*there were more which died with hailstones than they which the children of Israel slew with the sword.*" Terrible storms have been known in modern times. Showers of red-hot aerolites have fallen; also showers of hailstones of enormous size that have killed the cattle in the fields, and broken in the slate roofs of houses. Only a year or two ago the south of France was visited with a fall of hailstones of prodigious magnitude. Every commentator on this chapter has some similar fact to mention.* Cases are also on record in which, just as on this occasion, by the timely occurrence of such a phenomenon, the fate of combatants has been decided. A violent tempest, which was regarded as sent of God, completely confounded the enemies of Theodosius, in a celebrated battle in A.D. 394, while his own army was sheltered from the wind. The Austrians were worsted in the battle of Solferino, as Fuy points out, by a sudden and violent hailstorm. Thornley Smith aptly refers also to the shattering of the Spanish Armada, as they approached our shores, with designs against the Protestantism of this country. Obviously the event before us rises to far higher proportions than any of these providential occurrences.

* See Saurin, Bush, Thornley Smith, Jamieson, &c.

For how, when three parties are present—the Gibeonites within the walls of their city, the Israelites pursuing their enemies, and the Canaanites themselves flying before them to Beth-horon and Azekah,* should the celestial missiles never miss their deadly aim? How comes it that neither Israelites nor Gibeonites are injured, but the Canaanites alone? The answer is contained in the declaration that "*the LORD fought for Israel.*"†

2. We turn now to the second stupendous miracle—the staying of the course of the sun and of the moon. It would seem that while Israel was pursuing the scat-

* Beth-horon. There were two towns of the name which were distinguished as the upper and the nether (xvi. 3, 5; xviii. 13, 14). Josephus and Eusebius both define their position, enabling geographers to recognise them with certainty in the two villages—Beit-Ur el-foka *the upper*, and Beit-Ur el-tahta *the nether*. Beth-horon the upper stands at the summit of a conical hill, upon a long narrow mountain ridge. On each side of this ridge is a deep glen. These glens converge and meet about a mile west of the village, forming by their junction the valley of Ajalon. Just beneath the apex on which the village stands, the ridge breaks down abruptly, and in places precipitously to the point of junction of the two glens, and at a short distance from this point, to the west, stands Beth-horon the nether. This deep mountain pass, connecting the two Beth-horons, was that through which the Canaanites were pursued. The name Beth-horon signifies "the house of the hollow," probably with reference to this deep valley.

Azekah has not been identified, but Tell Zakariya has been suggested as representing the possible site. Van de Valde supposes the village Ahabek to be Azekah.

† Compare with the rationalists' view of this miracle of such wondrous distinguishing operation, the kindred explanation of the fall of Jericho. Sec p. 131, note.

tered Canaanites, the day began to wane.* The sun was setting, and the moon had already risen. The approaching night seemed likely to shelter the enemy from destruction, and to frustrate the prospect of a decisive victory. "*Then Joshua spake unto the LORD.*" How beautiful to see one in the heat of battle thus turning to his heavenly Master and Helper. A divine impulse is upon him. He is filled with the SPIRIT, and strong in faith, as one who has prevailed in prayer, he now, in the presence of his army, addresses the heavenly bodies, and bids each stay its course where now it stands in the firmament, namely, the sun over Gibeon, and the moon in the more distant valley of Ajalon.† As he spake, so it was done. The sun stood still in mid-heaven, remaining above the horizon for some twelve hours,‡ during which prolongation of

* From the phrase, "*in the midst of heaven*," some have inferred that it was early in the morning. They would probably at once say that it was at *noon*, but, the moon being mentioned, they are compelled to fix upon an earlier period of the day. But all that is intended by this phrase is that the sun remained where it was, midway between the horizon and the upper firmament, namely, "*above Gibeon*." That the sun was vertically above Joshua's head is certainly not to be supposed; but, if the words are to be pressed mathematically, this would be their meaning.

† Ajalon is identified as Yalo, a small village on the side of the long hill which skirts the south side of the valley Merj Ibn Omeir.

‡ Thomas Scott calls attention to the classic legend of Phaeton driving the chariot of the sun, as indicating a trace of the fact that in the world's history there had been a deviation from the

the daylight the avenging of the attack upon Gibeon was completed.

Such was the work, and such were the wonders of that day of double duration, that followed the long march by night from Gilgal to Gibeon.

With regard to the miracle of the sun standing still.—Nowhere in all the Bible is any fact more deliberately, directly, circumstantially, and clearly stated. In the midst of the narration, moreover, a solemn attestation of its veracity is introduced—

*“Is it not written in the book of the Upright One?”**

The miracle is, then, emphatically declared by the inspired historian to be unique even among miracles, for that never besides, either before or after, was mortal man permitted thus to command the elements, God giving effect to his mandate.†

But not only is this signal miracle plainly stated, solemnly attested, and upheld to admiration by the inspired historian, but the prophet Habakkuk refers to

natural course. Still more striking is the legend of the delay of Amphitryon's return, by the command of Jupiter to Mercury to stop the rising of Phœbus; for clearly the delaying of the day in one part of the world would involve the prolongation of the night in another. Herodotus (*Euterpe*, 142) mentions an Egyptian tradition to the effect that in former generations of men there had been an inversion of the relative positions of sunrise and sunset.

* A similar appeal is made (2 Sam. i. 18), in confirmation of the statement that David taught his own tribe of Judah to sing the song of Jonathan's bow.

† The Vulgate gives another sense, “Non fuit antea et postea tam longa dies, obediens Domino vocis hominis.”

it.* After telling how "*the LORD'S bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes—a sure word*" (apparently in allusion to the oaths of the tribes with the Gibeonites), he sings how, before the brighter effulgence of the artillery of Gon, "*the Sun and Moon stood still in their habitation,*"† and how "*GOD marched through the land in indignation, and threshed the heathen in anger*" (Hab. iii. 9—14).

Notwithstanding all this, modern critics seem, almost with one consent, to have determined to discredit the fact that there was any miracle at all on the occasion : or if so, at all events they deny that either the sun or the moon stood still. This they tell us is an astronomic impossibility. Admitting that all that is intended is that, by the cessation of the rotation of the earth upon its axis, sunset was detained,‡ even this they contend would necessarily throw the whole universe out of gear, would set at naught the laws of gravitation, and involve a thousand fatal consequences.

We are not careful to consider the supposed scientific

* The following weakened rendering is adopted by some writers who do not admit the force of this inspired corroboration—"The sun and moon were *obscured by tempest clouds.*"

† The prophet Isaiah, too, refers to God's "*strange work*" in the valley of Gibeon (Isa. xxviii. 21).

‡ For of course we do not suppose that the reference to the sun's motion implies actual locomotion in the sun, or in any way contradicts the Copernican system. The calendars even of this scientific age still tell us of the hours of sunrise and sunset. Nor do we expect to find more exact language in the Bible in reference to the apparent motion of the sun and moon.

impossibilities of the case, if God's Word declares it to be a fact, and He was concerned in its transaction, for "*with GOD all things are possible.*" That iron should swim is an hydrostatic impossibility, and it is quite contrary to the law of gravitation. That water should be turned into blood is a chemical impossibility. That an ass should speak with man's voice; that a prophet should live at the bottom of the sea in the belly of a fish; that the dead should be raised to life—all these things are contrary to all our experience of possibility. But if Omnipotence is in question, if He who created all things, and set all the heavenly bodies in their orbits, should choose to arrest their motions, then impossibility ends, axioms fall to the ground, and Science must bow the head and worship.

In order to avoid the supposed difficulties involved, different explanations have been offered.

One class of critics tells us that no miracle is even asserted; and that the paragraph that is supposed to declare it, no more means that the sun and moon actually stood still, than that the stars actually fought against Sisera* (Judg. v. 20), for that all that we have here is an impassioned description of the scene by a

* The meaning of that passage in Deborah's song is plainly that the stars brightly shining refused shade and shelter to his fleeing hosts, but lit the way for his pursuers. That passage, however, certainly is poetry. If this be poetry at all, it could not be stated more plainly in prose. That is a single clause, this is a full paragraph in which the matter is stated and restated with all possible confirmation.

contemporary poet, Jasher, who in figurative language represents the sun as reining in the steeds of his chariot that he may watch the deadly strife.

With regard to the Book of Jasher, whereas it is referred to again after an interval of more than five hundred years, it is doubtful whether anything more is meant than "*the Scripture of truth*" (Dan. x. 21). Josephus explains it in his paraphrase of the story as "the book laid up in the sanctuary" (*Ant.* v. 1, 17). Parkhurst, in his lexicon, renders the sentence thus, "Is not this written in the correct copy, or authentic record?" So, then, the clause would be equivalent to the attestation of the evangelist John, "*he that saw bare record, and his record is true*" (John xix. 35; xxi. 24); or to that in the Book of Revelation, "*These sayings are faithful and true*" (Rev. xxii. 6).

If, however, as has been conjectured, but from insufficient data, the Book of Jasher is an anthology, or book of odes,* collected in successive periods of the history of Israel, celebrating the exploits and experiences of the saints of God, being perhaps the same as "*the book of the wars of the LORD*" (Numb. xxi. 14), it is evident that the supposed poetic quotation

* Several commentators have presented the paragraph in question in short lines, printed in small type, and so have contrived to give it an appearance of poetry, but it is difficult to make out anything of the nature of an ode; or if it be an ode, to say where the quotation begins and where it ends. There is, indeed, an elevation of diction such as is conformable to the narrative of so stupendous an event; but this is all that can be said.

includes no more than part of verse 13, and that it is introduced to confirm the prose account of the matter. It is conceivable that, although God's Word is really above all appeal to subsidiary testimony, in condescension to human scepticism, such an appeal, although to a less authority, might be permitted for the confirmation of the notable fact; but that an extract from another document, inspired or uninspired,* should without such an object be introduced into the sacred text would be inexplicable.

Keil's view of the miracle is that the engagement with the Canaanitish host took place early in the day, and that all that is to be understood by Joshua's command to the sun and moon is that he proclaimed his desire, that before the sun should set the victory might be decided.† The declaration that there was no day like that before or after, he limits to the hailstorm

* For supposing the Book of Jasher be a different book from the Scripture before us, the question still remains who was Jasher? Was he the originator of the volume? When did he live? Was he a prophet? Where was his book kept? Some say that Jasher signifies the God of Israel Whose dealings were herein recorded; others that Jeshurun (the upright nation) is intended. (Compare Numb. xxiii. 21). Others, again, that each several spiritual hero, whose history was included, is thus designated.

† This view of Keil's is a reproduction of that of Maimonides (*More Nebuch.*, p. 2, cap. 35) and Levi B. Gershon, who were jealous of Moses' honour, lest Joshua should seem to have wrought a greater miracle than he. Owen says, in reference to Grotius' adoption of this explanation, "It is no small prevarication in Christians to give countenance unto such a putid fiction."—OWEN, *Pneumatologia* ii. 1, § 21.

mentioned earlier in the chapter, by which, in answer to Joshua's prayer [which, however, followed it], his enemies were discomfited.

Another line of explanation, or rather of evasion, is that of those who say that there may have been a miracle, but not such a one as the Bible states. They say that the sun did not actually stand still, in the sense in which the Scripture gives us to understand, but that it set on this evening just as it has ever set since creation. There was, however, on this occasion, a *parhelion*, or mock sun, which remained to enlighten the world through the night. Whether there was also a *paraselene*, or mock moon, as well, no one has undertaken to affirm. "Such *aerial phosphori*," says Whiston, "in other shapes, have been unusually common of late years."

This notion of a parhelion, though supported by many great names, Jewish and Christian,* has of late gone out of date, and it is now more usual to attribute the prolongation of the day on this occasion to *the optical delusion produced by refraction*. We are gravely told that every day at sunset, the sun has really sunk below the horizon, before it appears to us to have done so, and that the supposed miracle was merely a providential extension of this ordinary law of nature, "the electric state of the atmosphere, and the fall of prismatic hailstones, doubtless contributing to

* The two Kimchis, Shem Job, Le Clerc, Whiston, &c.

assist in the production of the unusual phenomenon."

Those who think this miracle of refraction, a miracle of their own invention* more satisfactory than that which the HOLY GHOST has recorded in the Bible, seem to have omitted to notice that their theory proves too much, for if the sun, after the opposite side of the earth had been turned towards it, still continued to pour its beams in an ever-lengthening arc upon the battle-field in South Palestine, by the time the semi-rotation was completed, the true sunrise would have arrived, and thus, instead of *a double day*, there would have been *three days* without an intervening night.

It remains to mention the explanation put forth by a German writer of eminence, who suggests that the "Sun" and "Moon" were two standards, which Joshua ordered to be left standing in Gibeon and Ajalon until victory was on Israel's side. †

Regarding each and all of these theories as incompatible with simple faith in God's Word, we venture to express the deepest regret that any of them have found currency in works that are extensively read, and that they are supported by the authority of those

* SPINOZA, and the author of a treatise, "*De Præadamitis*," are quoted by Saurin as putting forth this refraction theory, which is adopted by several modern writers. The return of the sun and its shadow ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz [or, ten steps on the Septuagint palace staircase], in Hezekiah's day (Isa. xxxviii. 8), is easily explained by similar expedients by this school of expositors.

† RITTER, in Henke's *Magazin*, vi. 1, quoted by Fay.

who are received as trustworthy guides. But it is time that we return to the narrative.

After the account of the staying of the course of the sun and the moon, and the avenging of the wrong upon the Gibeonites during the day hereby prolonged, the subject is rhetorically closed by the declaration that "*Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal*" (x. 15). Immediately after this, however, the story is resumed, and the intervening details are filled in. The doings of that day are first mentioned, namely, the pursuit of the fugitives, the capture of Makkedah, and the selection, detention, humiliation, and execution of the five kings.

The chapter then proceeds to recount events which must have occupied some weeks at least, namely, the capture of the cities of the slain kings and of their allies, and the utter destruction of all the inhabitants in every case. All the principal cities of Southern Palestine were thus taken by the Israelites, after which "*Joshua*," as we were before informed, "*returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal*" (x. 43).

It is not necessary in this lecture either to expatiate upon the details of the above events, or to follow out the story of the crushing of the still greater northern confederacy headed by Jabin, king of Hazor, as narrated in the eleventh chapter.

The enemy in that case were "*as the sand upon the sea-shore in multitude.*" They came, too, "*with horses and chariots very many.*" Joshua and all Israel marched

through the land to meet them. By the way, when within a day's march from them, God gave His servant Joshua another cheering promise like to that with which He had sent him against Adonizedek, "*Be not afraid of them: for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses,* and burn their chariots with fire.*" Armed with that promise, though this time no miracle was wrought,† Joshua and his host went forth conquering and to conquer. Thus was the whole land taken.

Leaving the fuller study of the historical and geographical matter of these two chapters to the reader's own further investigation, let us now turn to the spiritual admonition for ourselves that the story of this holy war contains.

We have before us two great parties—THE LORD'S HOST; AND THE LORD'S ENEMIES, namely—the *Israelites*; and the *Canaanites*. Let us trace the contrast in the position and experience of each of them.

I.—THE LORD'S HOST.

Israel and their allies are types of the Israel of God in every age. Joshua had fought at Jericho, and again

* This order is in conformity with that respecting the future kings of Israel (Deut. xvii. 16).

† Compare the cases of the attack upon Jericho and that upon Ai. The one attended by signs and wonders, the other illustrating the more ordinary experiences of the LORD's host. See p. 161.

at Ai, but the conflict is not over: still must he and his army wield the sword. Nor will one or two successful battles end the Christian's warfare. Satan may leave us for a season after some signal defeat, but it is only to amass new forces, and to renew his deadly attack, that he may spoil us of our purchased inheritance. Be not slothful, then, ye host of the *Lord*; but press forward, and spare no endeavour in the mighty struggle. But go not forth in your own strength. Look to the *Lord* to order your march, and to encourage you with His promises and His presence. Go as soldiers of *Jesus*, your Joshua, and rely upon His captaincy. Did Joshua receive a pledge of victory for all his army? *Jesus*, too, has received a like assurance in your behalf: therefore, "*Fear not!*" Your watchword is, "*FEAR NOT!*" (i. 9; viii. 1; x. 8; xi. 6).

"*The Lord fought for Israel.*" This is the sentence that gives the key to the whole narrative of the defeat of the five kings. It was the *Lord* Himself: it was not Joshua; it was not the Israelites who discomfited them. It was not by the sword of man; but still more by the giant hailstones—the *Lord's* arrows—the Canaanites were slain. It was at Joshua's voice, but it was in obedience to the *Lord's* order, that the sun and moon stood still.

Consider this, thou troubled and fearful saint,—those great luminaries in the heavens are less than the least of God's redeemed, bought with the price of a Saviour's blood. As thou lookest upon them—the golden sun in all

its meridian glory; or the silver moon, ruling as queen of the night—remember, at the word of a man of like passions with ourselves, they stood still in the heavens—yea, the course of the whole physical universe was arrested until Israel's day's work was done. Reflect, too, that when these heavenly bodies shall have passed away, thou shalt shine above the brightness of the sun for ever and for ever in the presence of thy God. Joshua's miracle was unrivalled in all the world's history: but, if not by the suspension of the laws of nature, at least by the answer of His children's prayers, God still works at the voice of man. It may be exceptional for the rotation of the earth upon its axis to be stayed, but for God to help His people, and to fight for His Israel, is no exception.

With Joshua's example before us—his prompt appearance at the scene of danger in response to the call of duty, and his holy persistence in executing the cause of God, let us realize our opportunities and duties, and with him plead that the sun of our short life may not go down before the cause of God committed to us has prevailed. Is there not a cause? Should the work of destruction in Joshua's days of partial light elicit such enthusiasm, and such heroic exercise of faith; and shall not the interests of the Gospel of JESUS, and the salvation of men's souls engage our highest, holiest energies? Shall we be faint and backward in our holy war?

There is, however, another party present in the narrative, namely—

II.—THE LORD'S ENEMIES.

The Canaanites may, in one application of the type, represent the spiritual adversaries of God's people, namely, the devil and his angels; but they not less fitly represent the men of this world who band themselves together in defiant opposition to the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Crushed and broken in the border, namely, at Jericho and Ai, we see the unhappy nations of Canaan gathering together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel with one accord. Utterly defeated and destroyed in the south under Adonizedek's presidency, a new confederation assembles, under Jabin, in the north, only to meet with a similar defeat and destruction. What infatuation! How could they resist the God Who had plagued Egypt? How could they conquer Him Who had opened a way through the Red Sea, and through the Jordan for His people? How could they turn aside His infallible word? Onward, with hearts judicially hardened, they pursue their fatal folly, until they have, by their own act and deed, brought all the penalty upon themselves that God commissioned Joshua to inflict. What must have been the feelings of the armies of the five kings when they saw their comrades on all sides falling beneath the giant hailstones that, like shafts from the naked bow of Gon, missed not their mark?

And when the report went through their retreating columns that the man whom God had sent against them had bidden the sun stand still, and, lo ! there it stood, obedient at his word, what hope would remain ?

O enemies of God, ye, too, shall one day know the keenness of the Lord's arrows and of His glittering sword, when, as a man of war, He shall come forth to fight against you. Then shall ye see signs in the sun and moon as in the day of Gibeon, and dreadful portents on every side shall tell you that your doom is come. Listen to the Word of God. He asks you, "*Can thine heart endure ? or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee ? I, the LORD, have spoken it, and will do it ?*"

The five kings found a cave at Makkedah, where they hid themselves from Joshua, but all in vain. They were brought thence, and were humbled beneath the feet of Joshua's captains, and then hanged on five trees. Ah ! no sheltering rocks nor mountains will hide the unsaved sinner from the terrors of the judgment-day. All things shall then be naked, and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. God give unreconciled, unpardoned souls grace to repent, and through JESUS to become members of the spiritual Israel, that so none of these things prefigured in the ruin of the Canaanites in Joshua's day may fall upon them ! "*Now then we are ambassadors for CHRIST, as though GOD did beseech you by us : we pray you, in CHRIST'S stead, be ye reconciled to GOD.*"



LECTURE XIV.

THE INHERITANCE OF THE LORD'S HOST; OR, THE ALLOTMENT OF CANAAN.

“As the **LORD** commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did,
and they divided the land.”

CHAPTER XIV. 5.

N our last lecture we saw the strength of Canaan broken. We heard how the nations of the land were arming from north to south, and gathering together for a united attack. We saw how the southern principalities were, nevertheless, in the providence of God, drawn out prematurely to destruction by their indignant effort to resent the defection of the Gibeonites, and how by signs and wonders, such as never before nor since were granted to the prayers of mortal man, it was seen that “*the LORD fought for Israel.*” We then saw the conquerors annexing city after city, and, *according* to their inexorable orders, sparing none

alive. We saw them, after a brief interval at Gilgal, returning to the scene of deadly strife, and surprising all Jabin's host at the waters of Merom. According to the promise of God to Joshua, in one day this mighty army of the united northern principalities was smitten, their horses houghed, their chariots burned with fire.

But not yet does Joshua, as before after each battle, lead back the forces of Israel to Gilgal: he pursues the work of conquest; and wars a long time with all the kings that had lent their strength and support to Jabin. He takes their territory, and slays both themselves and their subjects. Then the giant Anakins, from all the mountains of Judah and Israel,* are destroyed, save only those in the border of the Philistines, namely, in Gaza, Gath,† and Ashdod. Though but a few paragraphs in the history comprise the narrative of these achievements, some seven years was occupied in the work of crushing and exterminating the seven nations of Canaan. “*So Joshua took the*

* This is the first notice of the distinction that in later days assumed such importance. The tribe of Judah received its inheritance before the other tribes, and hence the language employed (xi. 16, 21, 22).

† It is one of the coincidences of truth (which we meet with in every page of Scripture, if only we have eyes to observe them), that Goliath, the famous champion of the Philistines, and his brother Lachmi, and the six fingered and six toed giant, were all of Gath: the other giants, Ishbi-benob and Saph, were of the same family (2 Sam. xxi. 22).

whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses."

We said (see Preface) that the Book of Joshua fell naturally into three sections, containing the history of *the entrance into Canaan* (chapters i.—v.) ; *the conquest of Canaan* (chapters vi.—xii.) ; and *the settlement in Canaan* (xiii.—xxiv.). The list of the thirty-one conquered kings (xii. 9—24) completes the second section.

"*And the land rested from war*" (xi. 23). Sweet must have been the return of peace, after the toil and din of the prolonged conflict: delightful to have the opportunity at length to sheathe the sword of destruction, and to cultivate the arts of peace. Happy is it for us, in our spiritual warfarc, when the devil leaves us for a season, and the song of gratitude goes forth from a peaceful breast in blissful communion with God. But though it is thus said that the whole land is taken, and though the tumult of war is hushed, another fact is also true,* both of the Israelites at this period of their history, and of every child of God after his most successful victories and attainments, namely, that "*there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed*" (xiii. 1). Thus the rest is but relative. The land was taken. The Canaanitish government was now suppressed. They had no army to bring to the front to

* Perverse minds, which delight to discover supposed mistakes in God's perfect word, have pronounced this to be a discrepancy ; but as crooked glass shews crooked objects, so here the distortion is only in the medium, and not in the truths contemplated.

cope with Israel: but they still retained cities and territory in various parts of the country, and, though acting on the defensive, were in many cases too strong for the invaders. Disbanded and dispirited as they were, they were, nevertheless, lurking in every corner of the land, terrible in their fastnesses as wild beasts, driven indeed from the prey, but still crouching and fiercely glaring and growling in their covers, and ever ready to spring forth and tear their spoilers to pieces.

This was according to the purpose of God. The Canaanites were not to be cast off all at once, but "*by little and little*" (Exod. xxiii. 29, 30).*

The course of God's providence here affords an exact counterpart to the course of His dealing with each individual soul. At conversion, the wilderness is left and Canaan entered (iii., iv.). Then, in the ordinances of the Gospel the young believer learns that the reproach is rolled away, and feeds upon the corn of Canaan (v.). Then Jesus is accepted as the Captain of Salvation (v., last paragraph). The citadel of Satan falls at the trumpet blast of faith and prayer (vi.), and further victories crown the work of grace (viii.), and soon the whole heart is declared the Lord's (x. xi.). His law and His great atonement are, meanwhile, acknowledged as the only rule of life, and the only way

* There was a providential reason for this. Their sudden removal would have resulted in a dangerous increase of the wild beasts, which they kept under.

of salvation (viii., last paragraph). But though, as the LORD's captains, we may set our feet upon the necks of our arch-enemies (x. 24—26), there remains yet "*very much land to be possessed.*" The Canaanites within the heart may be conquered, but they are not crushed; they may be driven back, but they are only partially destroyed. Old conquered lusts may hide their heads; vile passions may seem defunct, but they are not yet extinguished; they are but waiting the opportunity to break forth afresh, and bring the child of God into bondage and misery. Let us not listen to those who would, before the time, change the anxious cry of the saint of God, "*O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?*" into the complacent boast, "*O happy man that I am, for I have already found the Rest of Faith !*" Nay the work of reconciliation with God and justification in His sight, truly, is immediate, but the progress of sanctification is but gradual. "*By little and little,*" if we are faithful and swerve not from the LORD's commands, He shall drive out the Amorites within us: but neither in the history of Israel before us does the analogy warrant, nor does the experience of God's best and brightest saints in every age lead us to expect the realization of the Perfectionists' theory of a sudden sinlessness upon earth. Nay, for were all the hosts of Satan, and all the inward corruptions we are at present conscious of slain with a blow, the evil beasts of *spiritual pride and sloth* would speedily infest our

hearts, and involve us in worse misery than our present conflicts.

In entering upon the story of the allotment of the land to the tribes, we shall not attempt to touch the many interesting topographical questions that arise in connection with the identification of ancient cities with modern sites. As the Book of Chronicles is the great repertory for the study of Jewish genealogies, so is this part of the Book of Joshua rich in materials for the study of Biblical geography. Though no subject could be less inviting to the slothful mind that has no perseverance, or to the busy mind that has no leisure for it, perhaps few branches of sacred literature are more fascinating or more fruitful to those who have been able to prosecute it. At the same time, it would carry us beyond the scope of the present lectures were we to enter upon a minute consideration of the longitudes and latitudes of the tribal boundaries named. There are several excellent works upon the geography of Palestine, in which all the information that has been obtained on each locality has been registered. To such treatises this study more properly belongs.

Joshua was still at Gilgal, the place where he had first pitched the camp after crossing the Jordan. He was now old and well stricken in years—probably not younger than his contemporary, Caleb, who we find was eighty-five years of age. God calls him, at his

time of life, to defer no longer, but at once to proceed with the work of parcelling out the country among the nine and a-half tribes whose district was still un-assigned.

Particular directions had been given in the law of Moses for the division of the land. It was to be of Divine appointment. The lot was to determine the locality of each of the tribes. But none the less, human agency was to find scope in the adjudication of the several boundaries. Regard was to be paid to the numerical greatness, and, therefore, to the proportionate requirements of each tribe. This business of the work of dividing the land was to be discharged by Eleazar, the priest, in connection with Joshua, and the twelve princes, one of every tribe (Numb. xxvi. 52—56; xxxiii. 54—xxxiv. 29).

The order in which the allotment of countries and cities was made was as follows :—

(1.) The two and a-half tribes had their inheritance assigned in Moses' day, on the east of Jordan, at their own petition. (See Lecture XVI).

(2.) Caleb, the survivor of the former generation, claims his promised portion (Numb. xiv. 24).

(3.) Judah, already asserting priority, the tribe to which the birthright forfeited by Reuben was transferred (1 Chron. v. 2), the royal tribe (Gen. xlix. 10), and leader of the van (Numb. x. 14), receives the first lot.

(4.) The next in order to receive their lot is the *house of Joseph* the first-born of the beloved Rachel,

comprising the tribe of Ephraim and the remaining half of the tribe of Manasseh.

(5.) A considerable interval, the length of which it is impossible to determine, elapsed before the division of the land proceeded further, after which the seven remaining tribes were provided for, Benjamin, also beloved, taking precedence.

(6.) And now Joshua himself asks of the children of Israel the city of Timnath-serah. Beautiful is the moderation which could wait so long for, and could so humbly receive as a gift that which few victorious leaders would have hesitated to seize, or at least to demand.

(7.) The next matter in connection with the portioning out the land is the fixing of the six cities of refuge.

(8.) And, lastly, the Levitical cities, forty-eight in number, are selected throughout all the tribal divisions.

In reviewing the history of this work of division, which was spread over a considerable period of time, and which occupies nine chapters of the Book of Joshua, we can but select a few points of special interest. Amongst these let us first notice the story of—

CALEB'S INHERITANCE.

We have seen that among the tribes Judah took precedence, but there was one man whose prerogative was higher than that of any one in that tribe or in any

tribe. Joshua himself alone in all Israel stood upon equal ground. That man was Caleb, the son of Jephunneh.

By birth Caleb was a member of the house of Judah,* and one of the rulers of Israel, and as such was chosen to be one of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to search the land of Canaan (Numb. xiii. 2, 6).

Deeply interesting and instructive is the story of his faithfulness in repressing the discouraging estimate of the difficulties of the invasion, and in endeavouring to repress the despair that quickly spread through all the congregation. With what heartfelt sorrow did he and Joshua rend their garments as they remonstrated with the faithless company; and, on the other hand, with what hopeful confidence did they describe the good land, and cheer their brethren to venture forward.

* A fanciful theory that Caleb was a proselyte from the Kenizzites, descendants of Esau (Gen. xv. 19; xxxvi. 11), has been founded on the designation, “*the son of Jephunneh, the KENEZITE*” (Numb. xxxii. 12; Josh. xiv. 14); but, whereas we find the name of Kenaz in Caleb’s family, we may well suppose that he had also an ancestor of that name. Corroboration of the hypothesis is thought to be found from the recurrence of Edomite names in Caleb’s family; but the same phenomenon occurs in the case of other Israelitish families, and so proves nothing. Some have, again, imagined that he, or his father Jephunneh, to whichsoever of the two the appellation belongs, had gained a victory over the Kenizzites in some unrecorded encounter, and hence the title, with which they compare the surname “Africanus,” given to Scipio, &c. Where free scope is allowed to the inventive faculty, few difficulties will long remain unsolved.

If those that plead with men plead thus—the tears of deep feeling alternating with the smile of sweet assurance—if thus they stand firm, as God's witnesses, defying God's enemies, commanding His promised inheritance, it will be no fault of theirs if their testimony does not prevail. Nor will they themselves forfeit a goodly portion.

God's promise to Caleb, communicated to Caleb, was that the land whereon his feet had trodden should be his portion (compare xiv. 9, with Numb. xiv. 24), namely, the mountain of Hebron, to which he and his fellow-spies had penetrated when searching the land.

It would seem that in his whole-hearted decision Caleb had at that time surpassed even Joshua himself; for a fuller measure of praise, and a larger reward are accorded to him.

And now the thirty-eight years of weary wandering over, and the seven years of warfare accomplished, Caleb stands before Joshua, supported by the representatives of his tribe, to claim, or ever the lots are cast, his promised portion. He is as hearty and as hale as when Moses sent him forth; and as his bodily, so his spiritual strength is unimpaired: through faith, he is as ready now to face the tall sons of Anak as he was then.

Here is a study for us, in these days of feeble faith and puny deeds. Here is one who wholly follows the LORD. Here is one who fears neither giants abroad, nor the more dread opposition of false friends at home.

Alone he faces the infuriated crowd, who are even ready to stone him. Like a weather-beaten oak, as tough and as green as a generation ago, he bends not before the blast. This stamp of piety that bears the stress of time is that which is to be praised.

Note how prosperity attends this true servant of God. First, Joshua blesses him. Then, the first lot within the land of Canaan is bestowed upon him; and thence he drives out the three old giants* who were there (as would, perhaps, seem from Numb. xiii. 22) at his first going there; and who had retained the possession of the mountain when the city of Hebron was taken by Joshua, and Hoham its king was hanged on a tree (x. 36, 37). It is not said of Caleb's inheritance, as of that of certain other Israelites, that "*the Canaanites would dwell in that land*" (xvii. 12). Here is an Israelite of a different calibre. Nor is this all, but Caleb prospers in his family. The mighty Othniel, the captor of Kirjath-sopher, the first of the judges of Israel, and their deliverer from the yoke of Chushan-rishathaim, the Mesopotamian invader, was Caleb's nephew, and also his son-in-law.

* That one so resolute and also so old as Caleb should have deferred the seizure of the territory granted is somewhat surprising. The mention of the dislodgment of the three sons of Anak in the Book of Joshua, while it is recorded that from other places the Canaanites could not be driven, would, moreover, have led us to suppose that this event soon followed Caleb's obtaining of his request; but in the Book of Judges (i. 10), it is clearly included with events that occurred subsequently to Joshua's death.

Such are among the rewards of whole-heartedness,—health, happiness, success, favour with God and man: while those who are half-hearted towards God soon end in wholly following the world, the flesh, and the devil, and, withal, will never see the promised land.

We pass by the account of the lot of Judah. That of Manasseh and Ephraim is next chosen. We simply pause to remark, as we note the petition of Zelophehad's daughters to be recognised in the division of the land, that, as their case was fully entertained, so none shall be left helpless or unbefriended of our God in His disposal of the heavenly inheritance. Male or female, bond or free, all God's Israel shall be alike provided for in this Divine adjudication.

Leaving this matter, let us notice—

THE COMPLAINT OF THE CHILDREN OF JOSEPH.

The Ephraimites and the half tribe of Manasseh received an ample portion each, as the description of the boundaries shows; but, notwithstanding this, they were discontented, and demanded an increased award. A large part of their territory was forest land, and there were the Perizzites securely ensconced. And there were the Rephaim, the tribes of giants there, every man among them as Goliath. These strong Canaanites, moreover, had chariots of iron,* with which

* Some have supposed that by these “*iron chariots*” we are to understand that the axle-trees were armed with scythes, as was

they swept the battle-field, mowing down the ranks of their adversaries before them.

“Why hast thou giren me but one lot, and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, and the LORD hath blessed me hitherto?” So murmured the children of Joseph, under-estimating the district assigned to them, for to Manasseh alone, apart from the region across the Jordan, “*ten portions*” had been granted (xvii. 5).

Instead of a rough refusal, or a weak concession, the wise governor at once pacifies disaffection, and, in complimentary language, rebukes the sloth and fear that had prompted the unreasonable complaint. Surely a happier turn was never given to a grievance than when Joshua replied to the deputation in their own words. He endorses their claim to be a great people : he acknowledges their great power ; and bids them in this their conscious greatness wherewith the LORD has blessed them, claim their ample portion by hewing down the timber with manly industry, and, with manly courage, driving out the Canaanites before them. The nobility of Joshua’s answer is enhanced, when we remember that he himself belonged to one of the complainant tribes.

“Thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.” Here is a stimulating promise not for the children of Joseph

the practice in ancient warfare. Such chariots are called *currus falciferi* ; *quadrigæ fulcatæ* ; *ἄρματα δρεπανηφόρα*. Virgil describes the trophies of war as “*captivi currus, curvæque secures.*”

only, but for the Church of the LORD JESUS. Are there any who murmur because they be straitened, and who are weakly praying for better opportunities than their present circumstances afford. Up, then, and make them for yourselves! "*Thou art a great people, and hast great power.*" God is with you. His SPIRIT dwells among you. The Saviour has pledged that He will never fail you. Go, then, in this your might, and hew down obstacles and drive out opposition before you. Yea, your very hindrances shall become your helps. "*The outgoings thereof shall be thine.*" Let Joshua's promise of victory cheer you. It has its counterpart in the Christian's warrant, "*The GOD of peace shall crush Satan under your feet shortly.*"

The next point in the narrative that we shall notice is—

THE SURVEY OF THE LAND, AND THE CASTING OF LOTS AT SHILOH.

1. The land being now wholly in the hands of Israel, the position of the camp upon the borders of the land, namely, at Gilgal, need no longer be maintained. The prudential considerations that had so long detained it there are now at an end, and accordingly Joshua's head-quarters are removed to Shiloh, a place some ten miles south of Shechem.* Thither the congregation

* Identified by Robinson with the modern Seilun, a site surrounded by hills, where an old tower, fragments of columns, and large stones mark the former city.

gather to worship. There the tabernacle is set up. There is the seat of government established.

Up to this time the only tribes that have entered upon their inheritance are Judah, Ephraim, and the half tribe of Manasseh. Sheltered beneath the protection of these powerful sections of the nation, and nourished by the produce of their territory, the rest of the tribes were content, and made no move towards the seizure of the territory still unclaimed. How long this delay was protracted we have no means of determining. At length Joshua rouses them from their supineness, asking, "*How long are ye slack to go up to possess the land which the LORD GOD of your fathers hath given you?*" and at once he appoints a commission to survey the land. Three men of each tribe* are selected for the business. They are to go through the land, and note in writing its measurements, its physical characteristics, its cities, their size and number; and they are, moreover, to sketch out a seven-fold partition, that so the lots may be cast for by the tribes, whose the inheritance of each shall be.

Josephus fixes upon seven months as the time that was occupied in this survey, but the Scripture neither confirms nor contradicts this tradition.

Let us in thought contemplate this mission of the party of geometricians and geographers. Thirty-six in

* Whether three of the seven tribes unprovided for, or three of all the twelve tribes, is not stated. Josephus is plainly behind the mark in numbering the geometricians as *ten* men.

number, as would seem, or, perhaps, only twenty-one, explore the country with their measuring rods and lines, and their books and inkhorns. As they pass from field to field, and through the valleys and over the hills, the Canaanites peer after them, muttering their indignation, and yet no man comes forth to attack them. Too terrible is the memory of the war with Israel for any to dare to touch them. The giant hordes have been slain, and the high-walled cities are dismantled.

With this journey of these men, let us contrast that of the twelve spies whom Moses sent out. With what furtive steps must they have advanced, avoiding the highways, and keeping at a distance from the haunts of men: or, if they approached the cities, with what forebodings did they mark the strength of the fortifications; and how were they cowed, as the tall Anakins stalked past in their sight. How different now the attitude of Joshua's surveyors, who think not of concealment, nor of plans for sudden flight, but as the authorised representatives of the conqueror, penetrate unarmed and unprotected to every corner of the land.

Is the parallel in the spiritual life, which this survey offers, hard to trace? May we not here discern what should be the Christian's experience? Once he was as a weary traveller, in a bare wilderness, namely, in his unconverted state. Then he looked upon an entrance into the kingdom, if he thought thereon at all, as an impossibility. Then, in comparison to the foes of his peace, he was, in his own sight, as a grass-

hopper ; and in his unbelief he ignored the almighty help of God. And when, again, the days of unbelief were succeeded by days of conflict, still, like the host of Israel tarrying at Gilgal, or waiting in hesitation at Shiloh, the Christian has been slack to possess the portion of God's saints. How is it with thee now, Christian ? Canst thou, like Joshua's band of explorers, go forth with assurance, as one who walks through his own land ? Canst thou confidently review thy privileges and thy prospects, and praise thy SAVIOUR who has purchased thee thy goodly portion at the price of His own precious blood ? Say, is there an analogy betwixt thy case and that of Israel at this period ?

2. On the return of the surveyors with their book, in which the seven divisions of the land are marked out, Joshua casts lots for the seven tribes in Shiloh before the LORD. Eleazer, the priest, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes, as before, presiding with him at the drawing.

In ancient Greece and Rome, the lots were small tablets, or potsherds, inscribed with the names amongst which the choice lay. These were placed in a helmet or urn,* which was then shaken until one of the pieces

* The lots among the Romans (*sortes*) were small wooden counters. The vessel into which they were placed had a narrow neck, so that only one could come up at a time. It was variously called *sitella*, *situla*, *urna*, *orca*. It was filled with water, in which the lots floated. Hence its Greek name is *ιόρπια*.—See SMITH's *Dict. Ant.*

leapt forth. It is, doubtless, to some equally simple method that allusion is made in the phrases, “*the lot came forth*,” “*came up*,” “*came out*” (xviii. 11, &c.)

The tribes presented themselves in order of precedence, Benjamin, as we have seen, coming first; the tribes of the sons of Leah following; and those of the handmaidens, as usual, coming last. All was decided entirely by the lot. Hence there could be no dispute or discontent, for infinite and infallible wisdom chose out the inheritance of each.

The lot is no longer employed among us. Masius says of this method of ascertaining the Divine will, “I am disposed to think that the sacred history may have designedly concealed from us what was the ceremony and the process of casting lots, in order that we might not superstitiously reproduce it in the decision of our own doubts.”

But though the lot in its literality is discontinued,* the blessing that the lot marked is preserved to all God’s true children. How sweet to feel that their earthly degree, their friends, their place of habitation, their avocations, are all appointed for them by a Father’s providential care. Ever let us submit our way to His decision, and not venture to try ourselves to direct our own way (Jer. x. 23). Happy those who have committed their temporal affairs to God’s guidance, the lines shall fall to them in pleasant places.

* See, however, p. 154, note, where we find we have ourselves expressed a like view to that just quoted from MASIUS.

Happier still the lot of those who have an inheritance marked out for them among the many mansions of our Father's house above. Oh, that this blessed lot may “*go forth*” to us!

Leaving the subject of the Cities of Refuge for our next lecture, we will now refer to—

LEVI'S PORTION.

There was in the disposition of the tribes a punctual fulfilment of the ancient benediction of Jacob, and of the more recent benediction of Moses.* Thus Zabulon's dwelling was by the sea, and Naphtali's by the west and south (Gen. xlix. 13; Deut. xxxiii. 23). The same SPIRIT that dictated the prophecy then, now directs the lots.

Of Simeon and Levi, Jacob prophesied that God would *divide* and *scatter* them in Israel. Accordingly, Simeon's lot is found within that of his brother Judah; but how does God deal with Levi? In his case the curse is turned into a blessing. Phinehas, by his holy zeal for God, seems to have brought favour upon all his tribe. The covenant of peace was given unto him, and his seed after him (Numb. xxv. 11—13).

The tribe of Levi received no inheritance; but only

* See an interesting book by the Rev. C. H. WALLER, “*The Names on the Gates of Pearl*,” in which the characteristic distinctions of the tribes as exhibited in the history of each are traced.

certain cities, forty-eight in number, which were located in all the tribes: these, the heads of the tribe come and claim, and the claim is readily acknowledged by all Israel (xxi. 1—3). The LORD, however, gave them a richer portion than all the rest of the tribes enjoyed; for, though the LORD is the portion of all His people, in an especial sense, the LORD Himself was their inheritance (Numb. xviii. 20). Glorious lot! better far than well-built mansions and planted acres; for he who has God has all. He who has God has heaven.

Let those, who like the Levites have left the callings and the secular interests of the world, estimate their sublime prerogative. "*Separated unto the Gospel,*" let them not look with envious eye and hankering affections upon this world's emoluments and honours. The rewards of their service are sweeter, higher than those that any post of preferment among the magnates of earth can yield. Let the humblest minister of CHRIST magnify his office as one that he would not exchange for estates, nor for empires. Let the pastor who visits the house of mourning esteem his privilege above that of those who frequent the houses of feasting. Let the preacher count his pulpit as above the dazzling glories of a throne, and the blessed work of dividing out the word of life as one of which he is not worthy.

But, meanwhile, let the Israel of God see to it, that the Levite has a Levite's honour, and a Levite's portion amongst them. Let them see to it that he lack not a labourer's hire—a moderate sufficiency—enough to pre-

serve him from anxiety and need. Let them not place those who minister in holy things under temptation to ask the Gentile's questions, “*What shall we eat?*” or, “*What shall we drink?*” or, “*Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*” Whatever other public necessities are met, let the maintenance of a Gospel ministry be regarded as a duty and a delight. The churches of CHRIST are bidden to know them that labour among them in the LORD, “*and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.*” No kindness shewn to them, though it were but the giving of a cup of cold water, shall lose its reward ; nor, on the other hand, can those who reverence not the office of the man of GOD, and messenger of Heaven, expect a blessing.

On Joshua's modest inheritance we have already touched. Like a true patriot, his personal interest he considers last ; and then he leaves it in the hands of others. For him it is reward enough that Israel has triumphed, and that Canaan is theirs.

The section of the book which we have been studying closes with what Matthew Henry will designate as—

A RECEIPT OF THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE.

It is expressed in the following terms—“*And the LORD gave unto Israel all THE LAND which He sware*

to give unto their fathers ; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

“And the *LORD* gave them REST round about, according to all that *He* sware unto their fathers : and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them ; the *LORD* delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the *LORD* had spoken unto the house of Israel ; all came to pass.”

“God’s Word,” says Henry, “and His works, mentally illustrate each other. The performance makes the promise appear very true, and the promise makes the performance appear very kind.”

To us also belong the promises of God. To us also shall there be a like performance. The double promise of “*the Land*,” and of “*Rest*,” is given us. In exchange for the Egyptian bondage of sin, and the weary pilgrimage of this wilderness world, God promises “*a goodly heritage*.” After warfare with Satan and his host, He promises victory and peace. Trust Him now. Praise Him already, as by faith thou dost discern His purposes of love, and soon thou shalt praise Him in the performance, and own that all His Word has come to pass.





LECTURE XV.

BLOOD-GUILTINESS REMOVED FROM THE LORD'S HOST; OR, THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

“The **LORD** also spake unto Joshua, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: that the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.’”

CHAPTER XX. 1—3.



VERY thoughtful observer of God's works in nature must have been struck with the marked individuality that is stamped upon the various forms of life and existence. No human powers of invention or imagination could ever have struck out so many patterns, each congruous in all its parts, each distinct and different from aught else in all the world.

It is even thus with the emanations from the mind of God in the things of His spiritual kingdom. The

Scripture is full of surprises. Each new page opens upon some fact or some figure that is unlike all that has preceded it. Just as an experienced teacher, by varied illustrations, now familiar, now far-fetched, awakens interest and imparts instruction, so has GOD spoken unto us in His Word "*at sundry times and in divers manners.*"

Among the many striking types and allegories that the HOLY GHOST has employed to set forth the plan of salvation, there is one which now comes before us which is especially so. Full and beautiful as is the teaching of all the book in its evangelical analogies and applications, there is not perhaps a more forcible and complete a representation of the Gospel scheme of grace than that that is found in the appointment of the cities of refuge.

We discern herein, in the first place—

I.—A BENEFICENT POLITICAL INSTITUTION.

Three times in the law of Moses is this merciful provision referred to (Exod. xxi. 13; Numb. xxxv. 9—34; Deut. xix. 1—13). So urgent was the matter that Moses himself appointed three cities of refuge in the conquered land east of the Jordan, namely, Bezer, Ramoth-Gilead, and Golan (Deut. iv. 41—43); leaving instructions that three corresponding cities should be appointed in the western territory, when that, too, according to the promise of GOD, should be in the

hands of the Israelites. A further charge was added, but it was based upon a condition of obedience and love to God, which, alas! in the past history of the people has never yet been fulfilled—if God should yet further enlarge their coast, that is, until it reached the limits revealed to Abraham (Gen. xv. 18), and after Moses' death, to Joshua, namely, to the Euphrates eastward, and westward to the Nile,* then three other cities were to be added to the six already chosen (Deut. xix. 8, 9).

The purpose of these cities was that they might be sanctuaries of safety for any one who should unintentionally become the cause of the death of his neighbour.

The ancient law of God, given to Noah (and never to this day repealed), ran thus : “*At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed : for in the image of GOD made He man*” (Gen. ix. 5, 6). Observe that God holds the living as responsible for the dead,† and demands satisfaction for the blood that is shed. This early law, which, moreover, had been practically in operation in the day of the first murderer, was re-enacted by Moses in the following terms : “*Blood*

* Some understand by Shihor the “dark,” or “turbid” river, Wady-el-Arish ; but the Nile itself seems intended by this “*great river of Egypt*.”

† The designation “*every man's brother*” must not be limited to the murderer only. It includes those whose position as kinsmen, neighbours, fellow-citizens, or magistrates, requires them to take the matter up.

defileth the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it" (Numb. xxxv. 33).

In accordance with the high estimate God thus sets upon human life, even an accidental act of homicide was held to require satisfaction ; and unless prompt and energetic recourse was taken to the sanctuary opened, the vengeance of Divine justice, as personified in the Goel, or Avenger* of Blood, overtook the unhappy manslayer.

Speaking in reference to God's providential government, there is, in reality, no such thing as chance. If two labourers are felling trees in the wood, and the one man's axe-head fly from its haft and inflict a mortal wound upon the other, it is not chance, but God has delivered him who is slain into his fellow's hand (Exod. xxi. 13). And yet, speaking after the manner of men, how many are the chances of this mortal life ! There are but few of us who have not, at some time of our lives, had reason to thank God that we have not been the unwilling means of some fatal disaster. How often have we, through our folly, or our carelessness, or, it may be, through causes over which we had no control, endangered the lives of those around us. The daily press continually records these melancholy mishaps, occurring under every possible variation of circumstance : thus we may well understand that, ample as was the provision of six cities of refuge, there

* Or perhaps, as EDERSHEIM says, The *Redeemer* of Blood.

would, in a great nation like that of Israel, be many and frequent cases in which the protection they offered would be sought.

In ancient Greece and Rome, there were asylums and shrines where the supposed sanctity of the place sheltered the blood-stained fugitive from righteous retribution ; and it is probable that here, as in innumerable other instances, the Pagan institution was but an imitation of the Divine. In our own country, too, there were, in former times, similar sanctuaries. But how different the copy from the pattern—The one institution how pernicious, the other how salutary ! By the so-called *sanctuaries*, all that was unsanctified was promoted, for here wilful murderers were received, who, after a short period, were permitted to go forth to repeat a like violence with a like impunity.

Not thus was it with him who fled to the City of Refuge. A statement of his cause was required at the gates by the elders of that city before he was received, and then, even if they were satisfied, the protection was either only temporary, or it was permanent, according as the “*congregation*,” that is, the local court at his own township, might decide ; for after the homicide was received he was handed over to the representatives of his own city, who sent for him and fetched him under safe escort thither. If, upon trial, there was evidence of *malice prepense*, the elders of his city delivered him to the Avenger of Blood to be put to death. If guilty, no mercy might be shown him ; no money might redeem

him. If, however, he was found not guilty, they conveyed him back to the City of Refuge.

We have heard of Indian savages who, when one of their people is killed by a hostile tribe, will go out and kill the first member of that tribe whom they may meet. We have heard, too, of those who for years would cherish vindictiveness and deadly hate against some enemy. Quite opposite to any such spirit of retaliation is that which was to stimulate the *Goel* in his pursuit. The express command of God placed a sword in his hand which he dared not sheathe. As one entrusted with a prisoner of war, so was it, as it were, said to him, "*Thy life for his if thou let him go.*" To spare the guilty was to bring the stain of guilt upon all Israel, and therewith the curse of God, and every ill.*

If the Avenger of Blood should overtake the manslayer before he had reached the City of Refuge, whether through the delay of the latter in fleeing, or through his slackness in running, he was to fall upon him and slay him without inquiry. Again, if, after obtaining protection, the manslayer ventured forth from his shelter, namely, beyond the distance of one thousand cubits from the walls of the city,† his life was still to

* Let those who advocate the abolition of capital punishment perceive the state of the case as set forth in Scripture: and let them remember that the Divine inquisition of blood is Premeditated and Prejudaic.

† Various explanations of the dimensions of the suburbs of the Levitical cities have been given. In KITTO's *Cyclopaedia*

be a prey to the Avenger. Only one event could release him, namely, the death of the High Priest. Until then the Avenger of Blood was not free from his responsibility, nor the manslayer from his fear.

Can we conceive of any legislation that, while it tended to repress private revenge on the one hand, could more effectually, on the other hand, tend to guard the lives of all in the community? for, merciful as was the provision of a sanctuary, the prolonged detention within the walls of a distant city would be an irksome imprisonment at best.

eight adjustments are figured, none of which, however, seem satisfactory. The words of the text of Numb. xxxv. 4, 5, we understand thus. From the city walls radii were measured off, each a thousand cubits long. The extremities of these radii were

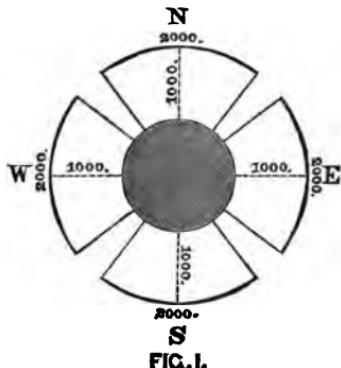


FIG. I.

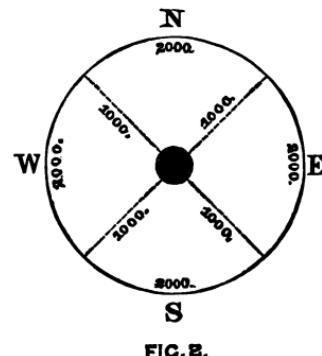


FIG. II.

then connected by lines of two thousand cubits long each, to the north, south, east, and west of the city. The accompanying figures indicate the form that the plan of the measurements would take according as the city was large (fig. 1) or small (fig. 2).

But let us now consider the Cities of Refuge as—

II.—A TYPE OF CHRIST.

Cold and comfortless is the spirit of Rationalism, which, while pretending to exalt reason, puts out the eyes of reason, and makes her blind to God's reasons for His dealings. Heavenly things are nowadays read as common places; and, contrariwise, ordinary matters are sublimated and commended as though they were divine. The SON of GOD, Who is above all praise, receives an encomium for His human virtues; while to a Shakespeare, a Milton, or a Goethe, a prophet's meed of honour is given. Let us become fools that we may be made truly wise; let us be meek and lowly that we may be taught of God. Rejecting the philosophy of science falsely so called, let us open our eyes, and, illumined by the HOLY SPIRIT's teaching, discern the hidden wonders of God's Word, and of His works.

We have seen that the Cities of Refuge were a beneficent political institution, tending to raise the estimate of human life, and to repress violence in the land. Let us see that this, however important in its way, was yet but a secondary end that these cities had to serve, and that their primary significance was spiritual and symbolical. No less than Noah's Ark, no less than Israel's passover sacrifice, these Cities of Refuge constituted a type of CHRIST and His salvation.

Each person concerned; each regulation for the

direction of the various parties; each circumstance of the case finds its counterpart in the Gospel antitype.

1. To begin with the unfortunate homicide himself—he represents the sinner in his guilt and danger, under the wrath of God. His mishap was held to bring blood-guiltiness upon the Israelite of old, and it necessitated his speedy flight. His predicament affords an analogy that is quite close enough to illustrate the condition of every one who has offended against the majesty of God by the breach of His holy law.

Let not the guilty parley and plead his extenuations, or think that he needs no atonement! So might the manslayer have declared his innocence of all criminal intent: and yet, had he not fled for his life, he would have perished amid his idle protestations.

2. Does any one doubt the efficacy of God's way of saving sinners? Would any one fain flee to other refuges? Ah! they are but refuges of lies. There were, doubtless, stronger cities, and, in some situations, nearer cities than the six that were selected in Canaan; but only in these six was there safety. Thus no other name under heaven than that of JESUS will avail to procure salvation (Acts iv. 12).

3. Money could procure no remission: nor will riches avail "*in the day of the LORD'S wrath.*" The richest, and the poorest; the men of influence, and the de-

graded and unknown will, all alike, perish in their sins, if they be not found "*in CHRIST.*"

4. Mercy could not be shown unless the prescribed conditions were observed. If overtaken outside the suburbs of the City of Refuge, relentless death was the manslayer's fate. And yet men believe that God will in leniency waive the express conditions of His Word. Impossible ! The inexorable terms are these—CHRIST, and in Him salvation, or else—destruction (John viii. 24).

5. Up, then, and flee, thou yet unsaved one ! Wait not vainly till others bear thee thither perforce. Complain not of thy God as an austere judge because He saith, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die ;*" but bless Him for His clemency, in preparing thee a place of safety. Run thither with all haste : say not, "I will sleep in peace to-night, and to-morrow I will bestir me and seek shelter." Nay, but rather "*Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee in all the plain,*" and "*Salute no man by the way,*" lest the avenger be upon thee ere thou art aware, and while thou lingerest, hew thee to pieces on the road. *Now, now, NOW* is thy opportunity.

6. This terrible Goel—the Avenger of Blood—whose fatal purpose no reward, no argument, no entreaty can turn aside, is but an impersonation of the righteous anger of the LORD against the sinner. If the guilty knows not his part, and flees not to the appointed

refuge, the Goel knows his part, and will not fail to execute his office. Ah, then, when judgments fall upon the head of the wicked, too late will the peril of neglected privileges and unbelief be understood !

7. That we may more fully perceive the appositeness of the illustration which the Cities of Refuge furnish of the Person and work of the Redeemer, let us notice their position in the country. They were to be "*in the midst*," not in the borders, or in the corners of the land (Deut. xix. 2). A glance at the map will show that they were almost equidistant from each other, and that thus they were readily accessible from every part of the country. A journey of half a day would be the utmost that would be required to enable a manslayer, in any quarter, to reach one of them.

Furthermore, the law required that a special "*Way*" should be prepared to lead to each of them (Deut. xix. 3). Jewish tradition tells us that this was kept in constant repair, being annually inspected for the purpose by the magistrates,*—that all impediments were removed,—that bridges were erected where streams crossed its direction,—that it was not less than thirty-two cubits in breadth,—that at every cross-road there was a notice placed, inscribed with the words "Refuge! Refuge!" Nay, more, that two runners were stationed on the route to guide the fugitive to his destination,

* Namely, on the 14th of Adar (February).

and that these were men learned in the law, and qualified to plead his cause on his arrival, and sue for his admission ; and should the Avenger overtake him before his arrival, it was their office to endeavour to pacify him until the case should be brought before the judge.

Beautiful as these legends are, they are found amongst Rabbinical fancies and fabrications of every kind, which are appended as commentaries to every part of the Old Testament Scriptures, and therefore we cannot attach importance to them. They serve, however, to show that the Jewish mind was deeply impressed with the true character of these sanctuaries.

At all events, it is true that Divine ingenuity could have devised no more than has been done in the way of making the sinner's refuge accessible. No lost soul will ever be able to complain that salvation was placed at a distance he could not reach, or that sufficient helps and intelligible directions were not given. All the features of the Jewish tradition, whether historically true or not, are true in the Gospel counterpart. Very nigh is the **LORD JESUS** unto them that seek Him.

8. The very names of the six cities are, to say the least, in keeping with the symbolism of the subject. Henry on this point cautiously says, " Some observe a significance in these names with application to **CHRIST**, our Refuge. I delight not in quibbling upon names, yet am willing to take notice of these. '*Kedesh*' signifies

holy, and our refuge is the holy JESUS. ‘*Shechem*’—a *shoulder*, and the government is upon His shoulder. ‘*Hebron*’—*fellowship*, and believers are called into the fellowship of CHRIST JESUS our LORD. ‘*Bezer*’—a *fortification*, for He is a stronghold to them that trust in Him. ‘*Ramoth*’—*high* or *exalted*, for Him hath God exalted with His own right hand. ‘*Golan*’—*joy* or *exultation*, for in Him all the saints are justified and shall glory.”

9. The Cities of Refuge were not open to native Israelites only, but “*the stranger*” and “*the sojourner*”—in fact, “*every one*” among them was accepted (Numb. xxxv. 15). Thus none is accounted an alien who, owning himself a sinner, flies to CHRIST. All are welcome: no distinctions of nationality, no disqualifications exclude from His favour. His unconditional word for all mankind is, “*Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*” His invitation is, “*Ho, every one !*”

10. There is a beautiful lesson in the fact that not only the city itself, but the very suburbs afforded safety. Once within the margin of a thousand cubits breadth, the manslayer might face his pursuer without fear. Is there not sweet encouragement here for disciples of little faith, who have but, as it were, touched the hem of the Saviour’s garment? Would that one could hear a fuller testimony from them! Would that they could tell of full assurance, and a present heaven! But though they seem as yet only to have crossed the

borders of the suburbs of the City of Refuge, the Avenger of Blood must now sheathe his sword, for even here there is salvation.

11. The isolation, the restrictions, and the privations experienced by him who was confined within the City of Refuge may be compared to the separation of Christian from the world and the things of the world: but what, after all, are temporary trials, if the precious life be spared? “*Yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life,*” said one who, though “*a liar from the beginning,*” yet this time spake what is for the most part true. How much more should the few trials and denials which God’s saints are called to undergo be welcome, if only the life of the precious soul be safe. Come, enter this fair city of eternal security, and thou shalt find that the inward peace thou shalt experience will more than make amends for the treasures and the pleasures left behind in the City of Destruction.

12. We have spoken of the danger of delay in seeking the refuge. Let us earnestly bear in mind the danger of the opposite kind, namely, of afterward quitting the safe retreat.

Time is said to cure all evils, but time did not diminish the manslayer’s liability. The wrong remained still fresh and green as ever, though whole decades of years might have rolled by. The case of the mutinous Shimei, who overstepped his appointed

limits in quest of his straying asses, is not in every respect a parallel, yet it illustrates that before us. He was put to death in his transgression, and himself owned his sentence just. Even so shall it be with those who in carnal confidence come forth from their hiding-place in CHRIST. Alas, that any, with whom the bitterness of death seemed past, should ever venture from beneath His protection! Such are made to possess the sins even of a forgiven past. Out of CHRIST, though long esteemed as Christians, they shall surely die; their blood shall be upon their own heads.

13. At the death of the High Priest, the manslayer was set free. Some have endeavoured to point out the philosophy of this release, telling us that the High Priest personified the highest representation of government and law, and that the sin being regarded as against government and law, the claim for satisfaction was ended by his death: but the true philosophy of this discharge is seen in its relation to the Gospel scheme of redemption. The whole of CHRIST's work could not be set forth by the symbolism of the cities themselves. So, then, this feature completes the parabolic portraiture.* The death of the One High

* It is obvious that the supposed mystical import of this detail is not exactly an extension of the symbolism of the rest of the subject, but rather a distinct symbol in itself, combined with the general subject: but there is nothing herein contrary to the usage of the HOLY GHOST in the allegorical teaching of Scripture. The LORD JESUS amplifies and completes the instruction of the parable of the Marriage Supper by the sequel respecting the Wedding

Priest is the event that removes our guilt, and by which we are set at liberty from all the claims of God's offended law.

14. There yet remains one point upon which we have not enlarged, namely, the sentence of death. Before the homicide could be received as a permanent inmate of the City of Refuge, a trial was appointed. If he was acquitted, he was admitted there; but if condemned as a designing murderer, he was given up to the avenger for summary execution.

This condemnation may be read in two ways. It suggests—

(1.) A BLESSED CONTRAST.—We have been tried, and we are found guilty. Our sins are of crimson dye. We cannot plead inadvertence, but must humbly acknowledge each one, "*I have sinned against the LORD.*" And yet the door of mercy stands still open; nay, more, it is the full admission of our guilt, and not the profession of our innocence, that is the condition of our entrance

Garment. The offering up of Isaac is evidently typical of the sacrifice of CHRIST, the Well-beloved of the FATHER: but the ram caught in the thicket by its horns, and by its death procuring the release of Isaac, is not less evidently typical of the vicarious suffering of CHRIST; or, to put the matter otherwise, Isaac returning alive from the altar of sacrifice represents CHRIST risen from the dead, alive after His passion; or again, looked at in another aspect, he represents the believer, spared through the substitution of the LAMB which the Lord had provided. The two goats, again, under the Levitical law, one slain and the other led away, together completed the symbolic teaching, which one alone was insufficient to set forth. See also p. 28.

thereat (1 John i. 9). Oh, wondrous love of God, that can welcome vile sinners such as we, rescuing us from the wrath to come, and justifying us freely by His grace !

This view of the subject has been beautifully expressed in the following lines,*—

Alas ! I am guilty ; and therefore I fear
 To dwell in the city I late loved so well :
 The Avenger of Blood is behind me, and near ;
 And the might of His justice and wrath none can tell.

Ah ! where in my peril and woe shall I hide ?
 Lord, is there a shelter to which I may fly ?
 For who can that terrible sentence abide—
 “ *The soul that hath sinned, it surely shall die ?* ”

Rejoice thou that tremblest : a fortress and home
 Is provided : no longer, then, linger or doubt :
 Lo ! JESUS, thy Refuge, invites thee to come :
 And coming to Him, He will not cast thee out.

But the condemnation of the homicide also suggests—

(2.) A SOLEMN COMPARISON.—Though it be so, that for all sin there is pardon, yet the Scripture speaks of “ *a sin that is unto death.* ” The case of a deliberate murderer, in contradistinction to an unwitting man-slayer, illustrates that of one whose sins are not the *sins of ignorance*, but *presumptuous sins*, namely, who has deliberately and persistently sinned against light and knowledge. From this depth of wickedness, for which

* By the author's sister, Miss A. R. BUTLER.

no City of Refuge is provided, and for which there is no forgiveness, either in this world or the next, the LORD graciously preserve us ! In reference to this sin against the HOLY GHOST, let us each pray with the Psalmist, *“Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins ; let them not have dominion over me : then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”*

And yet, while we refer to this analogy, let none be disheartened. Is any anxious soul even now fleeing with outstretched arms towards the sinner's refuge ? Is any troubled and ready to despair lest the charge of this unpardonable sin should be proved ? Fear not ! none whom God has reprobated seek shelter. Art thou crying, “LORD JESUS, receive me within the covert of Thy redeeming love !” This thy prayer is a sure argument that, however great and many be thy sins, thou hast not yet thus sinned.

Wouldst thou reach the Refuge City,
There to hide thy guilty head ?
Doubt not, then, thy Saviour's pity,
For for thee His blood was shed.

Say not thou art past retrieving,
Or that it is now too late ;
But rejoicing, and believing,
Enter by the open gate.



LECTURE XVI.

THE LORD'S HOST DIVIDED; OR, THE DEPARTURE OF THE TWO AND A HALF TRIBES.

“And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, wherof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.”

CHAPTER XXII. 9.



HE division of the conquered land is now at an end; and the tribes have departed, each to its own territory as assigned by the lots cast in Shiloh before the LORD; and now Joshua calls upon the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, to return to the land of their possession. They had been the first to receive their portion, but they had

pledged themselves to be the last to enter upon it. “*We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance*” Numb. xxxii. 18).

For some seven long years the war had raged (xiv. 10), and even when the land rested from war some considerable time elapsed, while seven of the tribes were slack to claim their possession. The survey of the country, again, was not the work of a day: thus it could hardly have been much less than ten years that these tribes were detained on military service. How welcome, then, must have been the summons of Joshua, and his dismissal, “*Get you unto your tents!*”* Far sweeter was it for these pastoral tribes to camp among their flocks and herds (Numb. xxxii. 1; Judg. v. 16), than to wield the sword in wearisome campaigns. But if their return to the congenial and lucrative pursuits of shepherds and herdsmen was sweet, much more so was the prospect of now rejoining their loved families across the Jordan, in the land of Gilead.

Shall we herein recognise an illustration of the universal principle that patient persevering toil, even in this life, brings its sure reward, and ends in prosperity and comfort? Nay, let us rather be led by the picture before us to think of the yet brighter prospect of the yet happier reunion that the dying Christian shall experience, when called to cross another Jordan,

* Not, as some say, meaning their *houses*. (See Gen. iv. 20; xxv. 27; Isa. xxxviii. 12).

to enter a better rest. More gladsome than the fond embrace of the long-parted wife and the darling sons and daughters, shall be the Saviour's welcome of His redeemed. More pleasant than the oaks of Bashan, and the pasture lands of Gilead, will be the delights of our inheritance !

Ere we pass further, let us pause to note that these men were sent away laden with wealth of precious metals and garments, and with very much cattle. This store and stock, the spoil of the conquered Canaanites, they were to divide with their brethren who had tarried east of Jordan. These, in number as many as 70,580,* had remained to guard the women and children left in the cities that these tribes had rebuilt there after the conquest of Og and Sihon.

This sharing of the prey with those who tarry at home with the stuff, was what Moses had done before (Numb. xxxi. 27), and what David did afterwards (1 Sam. xxx. 24); and is according to justice. To stand sentry may seem an inglorious task compared to the *éclat* of the hero who has borne the brunt of the battle; but, after all, the one man's work is as necessary as the other; and, if it has been assigned to him as his duty, it is as honourable.

* Of the tribe of Reuben the entire army was 43,730; of Gad, 40,500; of Manasseh, 52,700 (Numb. xxvi). The half of Manasseh would thus be 26,350. The sum of these is 110,580. Subtract 40,000 (iv. 13), and the remainder is 70,580.

Let no man despise his brother, or grudge him the rewards of service, if he has glorified God where God has placed him. All are not called to do all things. There be humble men for humble stations; the sick upon their beds; men of diffident spirit and devoid of public talents, who cannot preach abroad, but who yet can pray at home. If such cannot wear a warrior's laurels, they shall nevertheless claim their part in the trophies, and shall rejoice in the victory. To each of these also shall their Captain say, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy LORD.*"

Leaving these reflections, let us now enter upon the history of the departure of these Transjordanic tribes, and the events that followed.

Two parties are before us in the narrative. Israel is seen for the first time parted into two sections, namely, the eastern and the western section. The conduct and the spirit of each afford a study. Two words will sum up the lessons of the story. They are these—DEFECTION—DECISION.

First, let us observe—

I.—THE CONDUCT OF THE EASTERN TRIBES; or,
Defection.

At first sight we may feel disposed to ask, What fault can be found with these men, so devoted in their
U 2

discharge of duties, so faithful, too, to their covenant? Did they not for nigh upon ten years, if not even longer, share all the burden of the war? And does not Joshua himself command both their observance of Moses' commandments, and also their obedience to himself, and does he not discharge them with a full blessing? So far, indeed, all looks well; and yet a narrower inspection of their case brings us to the conclusion that their story is told rather for warning than for example, and that they are like too many of God's people, who, as it were, bear thirtyfold when they should bear sixty or an hundredfold.*

But let us go back to an earlier stage of history, and inquire whether it does not throw light upon the bearing of this event. Of Reuben, his dying father, sorrowing, said, "*Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel;*" and we are led to the conclusion that there is instability in the spirit of Reuben's descendants, as exhibited in the proceeding under consideration. It would appear that the tribe of Gad was the first to project the plan of having their portion east of Jordan,† for all through the story they are first named (Numb. xxxii. 2, 6, 31, 33; see also Deut. xxxiii. 21); and that the pliable Reubenites, swayed by their example, join in the same request. The Manassites are

* For this view of the subject I am indebted to an anonymous work entitled, "*The Gospel in the Book of Joshua.*"

† This remark I have borrowed from WALLER'S "*Names on the Gates of Pearl,*" a work already referred to, p. 266.

not mentioned as having taken any part in proposing the adjustment of the Transjordanic portions, but their share was given to them by Moses in recognition of the prowess with which the children of Machir had dispossessed the Amorites who held it before (Numb. xxxii. 39—42). Thus we are unable to determine to what extent they shared in the spirit that animated the Reubenites and the Gadites in their petition for an inheritance in Bashan and Gilead.

In that request we can too plainly trace indications of *Sloth, Schism, Self-will, and Sensuality*.

1. *Sloth* was apparent—"Bring us not over Jordan," said they, as they lifted up their eyes and saw the fine grazing country, so suitable for their flocks and herds. Gladly would they have sat down already at their ease, and foregone the toils of war. In no measured terms did Moses chide their supineness. "Shall your brethren go to the war, and shall ye sit here?" he asked with indignation; and he went on to denounce them as "*an increase of sinful men*," who, in despising the pleasant land, were, as it were, sons of those half-hearted men, the unfaithful spies.

2. There was also *schism* in their separation of themselves from the rest of the tribes—"We," and "*the children of Israel*" (Numb. xxxii. 16—18)—such was their mode of designating the two parties whom God had made one nation. Had the other tribes spoken thus, and acted in such a spirit, this territory east of Jordan would never have been taken. Most unrighteous, then,

was the proposal to disregard their obligation to their brethren, and to break the unity of Israel.

3. Again, *self-will* was exhibited in their attitude. Though wanting in a fixed, decided, whole-hearted determination to do the LORD's work, to cleave with full purpose unto Him, and wholly to follow His bidding, these same men were obstinate and peremptory in the pursuit of their own set scheme. It is often thus with those who are not walking in close communion with God—they are weak where they should stand firm, and firm where they should yield.

The course they desired to take was not indicated by the oracle of God, and was, moreover, evidently most distasteful to Moses, their temporal and spiritual head ; and yet they persisted in urging their demands. It is true that at length they offered, what, but for Moses' sharp rebuke, they would have evaded, namely, that they would take their share in the burden of the campaign ; but they did not undertake to do this until they had plainly told him that they would follow their own counsel, and would build houses and sheepfolds east of Jordan ; and, lest Moses should doubt their absolute decision to take for themselves what they had, as a matter of form, asked him to sanction, they further added that they would not inherit with the children of Israel on yonder side Jordan, “ *because*,” said they, “ *our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward*.”

4. Once more, theirs was a *sensual* choice, and herein the defection of the two and a-half tribes principally con-

sisted. The land of Cavaan was “*the land of the possession of the LORD*”—not only, that is, the land which the LORD had given to Israel to inherit, but that which He had chosen, wherein in a peculiar and especial sense He Himself would dwell; as His own possession (see Levit. xxv. 23; Deut. xxxii. 43; Isa. viii. 8; Ezek. xxxviii. 16; Joel ii. 18). Not only was it “*a good land*”—“*a land which the LORD GOD cared for, and upon which His eyes rested always, even from the beginning of the year unto the end of the year*” (Deut. xi. 12); but it was, moreover, the place of His tabernacle. Men who could esteem the rich pastures of Gilead and Bashan before the sacred associations of the *Holy Land*; and who could as contentedly remain on the borders of the wilderness, as in the proximity of God’s sanctuary, must have been sadly wanting in spiritual affections.

The lack of devotion in these tribes appears, too, in another circumstance. “*We will pass over armed before our brethren.*” Such was their pledge; but how did they fulfil it? They deputed a company of forty thousand only to go to the war, reserving nearly double that number to guard their own possession; and there they left their families and goods. Their treasure and their heart was not with Israel, and Israel’s God.

How is it, then, that Joshua does not blame, but, on the contrary, blesses them? With regard to Joshua’s blessing, let us not mistake. When Lot chose the fertile plain of Jordan with a like wilfulness

and a like carnality, we doubt not that Abram bade him God speed at parting. When Orpah returned to her mother's house, Naomi dismissed her with kisses and prayers; although she lacked Ruth's faith to choose Naomi's God for her God, or to trust under His wings. So, again, Samuel, though grieved to the heart at Israel's demand to be like the world, and have an earthly king, welcomed Saul as the *LORD's* anointed; and, though he solemnly declared the wickedness of the people, yet he ceased not to pray for them, assuring them, "*The LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake.*"

Thus it is here. Moses allowed, though he did not approve, the request of the two and a-half tribes. So, likewise Joshua, inspired by the same HOLY SPIRIT to utter the mind of God, pronounces an unqualified blessing: but, as though he, like Moses, recognised the hereditary instability of the sons of Reuben, and the self-seeking spirit of the sons of Gad,* he prefaces his blessing with a word of earnest exhortation to whole-hearted obedience and love to God (xxii. 5).

Alas! the blessing reveals the love of him that blesses, but it does not confirm unstable hearts, nor alter the relations of causes and effects. As it was now with these tribes, so it was afterwards. In the great

* It does not appear that the half tribe of Manasseh were thus admonished. They were, as we have seen, upon a different footing to the two tribes in the transaction. We may note, that they drop out of notice in the conclusion of the story of the altar *Ed.*—See xxii. 32, 33, 34.

crisis that occurred in a later generation, when the second Jabin, with his nine hundred chariots of iron, and his captain Sisera, mightily oppressed the children of Israel, "*Gilead abode beyond Jordan*," responding not to Barak's summons. Reuben, unstable still, pondered and considered with great searchings of heart, and—abode still "*among the sheepfolds, to hear*" not the trumpet-blast and the noise of war, but "*the bleatings of the flocks*" (Judg. v. 15—17).

From Reuben and from Gad arose no judge, no great deliverer. One solitary exploit, in the conquest of the Hagarites in the days of Saul, is all that is recorded of them (1 Chron. v. 18—21); nor are any heroes named of these tribes, unless we except David's lion-faced and lion-hearted men of war of the Gadites (1 Chron. xii. 8—15; compare Deut. xxxiii. 20).

Thornley Smith remarks of these tribes that, "the first of the Israelites to gain their inheritance, they were the first to lose it, for they transgressed against the LORD God of their fathers, and were carried away captives into Assyria by Tiglath-Pileser, in the days of Pekah, king of Israel" (2 Kings xv. 29).

Oh, that we who read this record may not be slothful in God's service, and yet eager and active in seeking this world's store, and pushing our own projects! May we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and take heed and beware of covetousness. May we not be among those that separate themselves: or who too lightly esteem the bonds of Christian fellowship, and

the benefits of Gospel privileges. Be it our first consideration, when we would choose a place of habitation, not, What shall be our emoluments? but, How will our spiritual interests and those of our families be best promoted? Oh, that we may live so unmistakably near to God that we may not raise the doubts of God's people! May we never place ourselves in such a position as to merit such rebukes as that of Moses, nor even such solicitous reminders as Joshua tendered to the Transjordanic tribes.

No sooner are the two and a-half tribes dismissed, than they bring themselves under more serious suspicion than ever, namely, by the erection of—

THE ALTAR ED.

The Reubenites and Gadites had, as we have seen, spoken of themselves as a people apart from the children of Israel. They had chosen their own inheritance, not waiting, like the rest of the tribes, for the lot to be cast before the *LORD*: and now they had turned their backs upon Shiloh, and left Joshua, to go to a region, included indeed within the promised limits of Israel's inheritance, but, nevertheless, designated as "*the country of Gilead, the land of their possession*," in contradistinction to "*the land of Canaan, the land of the possession of the LORD* (xxii. 9, 19). Is it surprising, that having thus in a manner created a

schism that compromised their own nationality, they should fear lest, in time to come, upon some occasion, the breach might become wider and wider, until their descendants in Gilead might be disowned as having common interests with the Israelites in Canaan? Was there not a possibility that their local separation might in after ages be read as an act of rebellion against Joshua's government, and a secession from the religion of their forefathers and of Moses? Might not the conduct of the Reubenites and their associates be construed as a repetition of that of a former generation, when Dathan, Abiram, and On, sons of their own ancestor, Reuben, had conspired against the civil authority of Moses, while Korah and his company supported the mutiny by attacking the priesthood of Aaron?

With such apprehensions, aroused by the anomaly of their circumstances, and by the accusations of their own consciences, would it not have been well to have laid the case fully and fairly before Joshua and the princes of the other tribes, and to have obtained such terms of recognition and such assurances of brotherhood as would have established their rights with the rest of Israel? Or, better still, should not their ambiguous position have been laid before God, that guided by His holy oracle they might have received guidance and reassurance?

But what if the oracle should say, "Return!" No: they will take no such humble course. But they will,

by a strange artifice, force from Israel the desired acknowledgment of the national union. Rather will they cast a suspicion and a slur upon them, than admit their own defection.

Accordingly, on their arrival at the borders of the Jordan,* before they cross to the other side (xxii. 11),† as though in assertion of their claim in the country west of Jordan, they erect a colossal altar, a conspicuous object, making it, with its boards of shittim wood, its horns, its crown, its rings, its staves, its network of brass, its sloping ascent, and its relative proportions, an exact facsimile (if we rightly understand the matter), in every thing but its magnitude, of the altar of the tabernacle in Shiloh.

Thus it was, as they subsequently explained, “*a Witness*” of their relation to the Mosaic ritual; for no heathen nation, with its own rites and observances, either could or would reproduce these details of form and arrangement.

* Literally, the *circles* of Jordan, which may refer to the hillocks which form a remarkable feature at a certain point of the country near the Jordan; or, again, the meanderings of the river may be thus designated. But the same word is found at xiii. 2, and Joel iv. 4; thus our version probably gives the sense. The Vulgate renders “*tumulos*;” others have rendered “*Gilgal*;” the Septuagint leaves “*Galiloth*” untranslated.

† The word rendered in our version “*at the passage*” occurs Exod. xxv. 37, and xxxii. 15. There seems no reason for the limitation thus suggested; “*upon the side* of the children of Israel,” is perhaps the true rendering.

Now, had this great altar been built within their own territory, as Josephus asserts it to have been, and as many modern commentators understand the Scripture before us to state, the other tribes might not have taken up the matter so promptly and so warmly, but erected as it was "*over against*" the land of Canaan, that is, on the front of the land of Canaan (see Exod. xiv. 2), they are soon informed of its existence, and roused to the highest pitch of indignation. This was precisely what was intended. The two and a-half tribes knew the certain effect of their act would be to evoke a loud and general protest. They wished to elicit some such notable demonstration of feeling on the part of the nation as might furnish them an opportunity of asserting their own rights and privileges in Canaan.

Their conduct herein may be compared to the reckless device of Absalom, who, when he could not draw Joab to a conference by invitation, set fire to his field of standing corn, and thus compelled him to come to the front.

They pretend that they are going to tamper with the national religion divinely appointed by Moses. They make as though they were now accounted as outcasts, and excluded from Shiloh and the tabernacle, and from the future sanctuary that should afterwards be established in the place that God should choose, and that, therefore, they must needs erect an altar for themselves, which they would indeed locate within the

holy territory,* but which, nevertheless, should only be just across the fords of Jordan.

Such was their rash, ill-devised, disingenuous and petulant proceeding; and such are the shifts and schemes to which men are driven to resort when they have placed themselves in a false position.

The LORD help us to walk closely with Him. May we be Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile, straightforward and above suspicion in all our dealings. The LORD keep us from all doubtful paths, and if in our waywardness we have erred, may He pardon us, and recover us from our deviations, and give us grace to walk henceforth to His praise and glory, and keep us from yet wider wanderings and yet deeper falls!

We turn now from the Eastern tribes and their *Defection* to consider—

II.—THE CONDUCT OF THE WESTERN TRIBES; or, *Decision.*

As one man, they gather themselves together for war. The purity of worship has, in their eyes, been

* Lieut. CONDER claims to have found the remains of this altar at Kurn Surtabeh, on the summit of the almost inaccessible cone of the Tell. The name “*Ed*” is said still to be retained in a slightly modified form. But the Scripture does not indicate that the altar was built *upon a hill*. The ruin at Kurn Surtabeh is of *carefully cut stone*. This is another point of marked difference from the pattern at Shiloh. It, moreover, occupies an *oblong* base, whereas the Levitical altars were all four-square. This last

defiled. Nay, more, they regarded the matter as an overt avowal of idolatry, and a declaration of secession from the God of Israel (xxii. 16, &c). As there is but one God, and but one way of acceptance before Him, so there can be but one altar of sacrifice, type of the one atonement through the One Mediator, whose work of grace was afterward to be revealed. The multiplication of altars, then, they read as manifest treason against God, and against the Israel of God.

No consideration will restrain their holy jealousy. No feeling of respect for the tribe of the first-born ; no sense of gratitude for the years of faithful service in the war weighs with them ; for the cause of God, and the interests of religion have been assailed. The law had provided for the contingency of apostasy and idolatry, and had commanded that, though the nearest and dearest relative should so offend, no pity should be shown, and that any city found guilty on this wise should be utterly destroyed, and made a heap for ever (Deut. xiii). The ten tribes were, therefore, now prepared with one blow to sweep their offending brethren, and the altar that they had reared, from the face of the earth, and so to avert the fierceness of the wrath of God that they feared would fall on all the nation.

But the same law required that a preliminary in-

objection seems fatal to the supposed identification. Further investigations may more fully clear the matter. If this be the relic it is supposed to be, our interpretation of the phrase "the pattern of the altar of the LORD" (xxii. 28) cannot be maintained.

vestigation should be made. They were not to act in the matter, however credibly it might be reported, upon hearsay, but were to "*inquire*," and "*make search*," and "*ask diligently*" whether it were "*truth*," and "*the thing certain*" that such abomination as the introduction of the service of other gods had been wrought in Israel (Deut. xiii. 14).

As august an embassy as can be sent is accordingly appointed to ascertain the matter, and, if needful, to denounce the trespass of the apostate tribes, and, unless they retract therefrom, to declare war against them. The very first man in dignity in each of the western tribes is chosen: and these ten princes are headed by Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the priest.

Earnestly does this representative body, in the name of all Israel, point out the fearful sin of departing from God and His ordinances, and setting up new objects of worship. They remind their suspected brethren how complicity with heathendom has brought the direst calamities upon the nation, and that even to that day they are still contaminated by that old defilement, the worship of Baal-peor, with its impure accompaniments (Numb. xxv. 1—3; Ps. cxxvi. 28); and how even one man Achan's transgression, in this matter of contact with idolatrous associations, brought a curse on all the congregation:—how much graver a matter, then, is it if a whole section of the nation should similarly rebel!

To show that it is no matter of party spirit, or tribal

jealousy, but a question of faithfulness to principle, and fear of God, they invite the supposed backsliding tribes to return and dwell within Canaan itself. If yon eastern land is not holy enough for a place of worship, so that ye must needs establish a sanctuary within our western border, then rather come over the Jordan permanently yourselves, and fix your residence among us altogether: quit "*the land of your possession*;" come back and dwell with us in "*the land of the possession of the LORD'S*," and assemble with us to worship the God of Israel, at His own altar, in His own tabernacle, which He hath Himself placed among us (Ps. lxxviii. 60).

The matter is adjusted: the ruse is explained: its purpose has now been served. The altar was not for sacrifice or offerings at all, still less for sacrifice to other gods. It was but a monument and a token. It was designed not to uproot, but to uphold the worship of God. Not only was it itself a copy of the pattern of the altar of the LORD in Shiloh, but it had now become a WITNESS. This general uprising throughout of the tribes, and this formal embassy and conference, would constitute it a memorable sign that "EL—ELOHIM—JEHOVAH" (xxii. 22), "*the LORD, the Mighty GOD; the LORD, the Mighty GOD*," was the God of Israel on both sides of the river.

The explanation given and accepted, the Altar of Witness, therefore named "*ED*," was allowed to stand, a pledge of that which it had seemed, at first appear-

ance, to contradict—a warrant for time to come of the indissoluble bond of union between the parted tribes, and of the right of Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh to worship with their brethren in the land of Canaan.

How glorious an example of whole-hearted faithfulness to God is set in the action of the ten tribes! The first semblance of idolatry calls a nation to its feet, and causes a universal burst of indignation. A strange altar, a novelty in religion, a seeming conformity to idolatry, they accounted as rebellion against God, and therefore as against themselves, His people. They tremble lest the wrath of God should overtake them in consequence, and therefore they haste to express their abhorrence of the act. The bond of brotherhood does not constrain them to compromise. They insist on immediate repudiation of the supposed apostasy.

Alas! how different to this holy jealousy for God, and intolerance of false religion, is the boasted charity of the modern Israel of God. Each rising corruption is patiently endured. Whether it be Sadducean subtractions from, or Pharisaic additions to God's Word; infidelity on the one hand, or superstition on the other, the evil is allowed to spread, and its promoters are left unmolested; and the storm of indignation falls only upon the faithful watchman who sounds the alarm upon the walls of Zion. Oh, that professing Christians would discern that lax stewardship is not true charity, and that there may be more love in a stern anathema

upon the subverters of the Gospel of salvation, than in the blandest toleration of soul-destroying error ! God keep us from all personal bitterness and censoriousness of spirit : let us bid God speed to those who are right in the great essentials of doctrine, even though in minor matters they may hold views and opinions that we regard as erroneous ; but the moment the foundations are touched, there must be no complacency, no concession.

APPLICATION.

Our study is now concluded, but let not its teaching pass away from us.

We have elsewhere studied the opposite relations of the Israelites and the Canaanites ; and have urged the intense importance of decision between the condition of the LORD's host and the LORD's enemies. The present subject, however, comes home to the LORD's host themselves, and shows that even among His people there may be differences of considerable degree. There be those whose calling and election is made sure to themselves and to all observers ; and there be those who bring their name and profession as Christians into discredit, and of whom it often becomes a matter of the gravest doubt whether they have ever passed from death unto life at all.

Reuben, "*unstable as water*," and as such doomed never to excel ; and Phineas, "*zealous for his GOD*,"

to whom the LORD's covenant of peace was given, are types of character that still exist side by side in the Church. Both these men were true Israelites; both were blessed of God; but how disproportionate the spiritual standing of each. Dwelling, as it were, on the western side of the Jordan, near to the sanctuary, may we enjoy close and frequent communion with our Heavenly Father! May God give us the holy zeal and devotion, not only of a Phinehas, or of the nine and a-half tribes, but of Him who said, "*The seal of Thine house hath eaten Me up!*" May the HOLY SPIRIT direct all our sojournings; and, guided by the counsels of infinite love and unerring wisdom, may we ever walk in the full light of His countenance! This will be better than corn and wine, or flocks and herds (Psa. iv. 6, 7).

Ah! what are the fertile plains of Gilead, and the fat bulls of Bashan, compared to the portion of those whose views of His grace are clear and uninterrupted? Others may be blessed with this world's wealth, but theirs is that blessing of the LORD that maketh truly rich, and with which He addeth no sorrow.





LECTURE XVII.

JOSHUA'S FIRST FAREWELL; OR, THE LORD'S HOST AND THE NATIONS.

“Come not among these nations; * * * but cleave unto the **LORD**
your **GOD**.”

CHAPTER XXII. 7, 8.



HE history of the entrance of the **LORD's** Host into Canaan, of their conquest of Canaan, and of their settlement in Canaan is now completed; but the book is not yet ended. A kind of appendix is added, in which Joshua's two farewell charges are recorded. Thus ever in Scripture the historic portions are followed by portions directly didactic. The works of God's providence are thus enhanced by the words of His inspiration. These are as “*Apples of gold*;” those are the “*Pictures of silver*” in which they are set. The facts—the circumstances are as a burnished

lamp, itself resplendent and beauteous ; but such appeals as these are like the brilliant flame it carries. How gracious is the record of the ministry of the LORD JESUS ; but in His discourses, and especially in those of the later pages of the Gospel narrative, we seem to have passed the outer court, and to have been admitted into the Holy of Holies. In like manner, in the Old Testament, who that has read the earlier books of the Pentateuch does not feel, on arriving at Deuteronomy, that he treads, were it possible, upon yet holier ground ? Let us, however, refrain from comparisons (for all God's Word is perfect, and is infinitely holy), as we now pass on from the story of the exploits and experiences of Israel, to listen with the summoned elders, heads, judges, and officers,* while Joshua, ere he dies, tells them the mind of God.

Where the earlier of Joshua's two farewells to Israel took place the Scripture does not inform us. Had it been at Shiloh, as some have supposed, this would probably have been stated : thus it is a more probable conjecture that it was at his own city of Timnath-Serah.

The two discourses are distinct, though the subject of the first involves, and is closely connected with that of the latter. This refers to the *nations* ; that directly to the *gods*, of Canaan. In this, Joshua rouses Israel from the lethargy and inaction into which they

* In verse 2 read thus, "Joshua called for all Israel, *namely*, for their elders, &c."

were lapsing ; in that, he elicits an oath of fealty to the God of Israel.

The double subject of this earlier discourse, namely, Devotion to God, and Separation from the Canaanites, is clearly indicated by the two often-recurring phrases, “THE LORD YOUR GOD,” and “THESE NATIONS.” The former occurs thirteen times in the chapter,* and the latter five times.

The structure of Joshua’s warning is not hard to trace. We shall see that there is *an impressive Introduction*; *three well-marked Divisions*; and then *a solemn Conclusion*.

THE INTRODUCTION.

Joshua’s exordium† is very short, but it is yet in-

* Compare the recurrence of the similar phrase, “THE LORD THY GOD,” in Deut. xxx. The master’s words are still ringing in the memory of “*Moses’ minister*.”

† VINET, in his valuable work on sacred oratory, “*L’Homilétique*,” includes “a reference to the circumstances of the speaker” as one of the methods of introducing the subject—“a bold course,” however, he adds, that “requires delicate handling, and which must be regarded as exceptional, and the difficulty of which can only be solved in the execution” (p. 360). He speaks elsewhere of the intimate relation of the speaker to his auditors as justifying such personal reference. “The speaker’s personality” in such a case, he says, “has a weight, which he will take into consideration. He speaks, indeed, to them in behalf of God, but there is also the spontaneity of the love he has towards them. He is in the position of a father of a family, and not of a stranger. The very declaration of his sympathy with them involves a reference to himself. Humility will regulate, but it will not repress the manifestation of personality” (pp. 486, 487).

WHITEFIELD, in one of his sermons, exclaims, “Do not be angry

tensely impressive. It is worthy of the soldier. It is in keeping with the self-renunciation of the man. Had he chosen to enlarge, what an autobiography could he have set forth. With what a catalogue of services could he have appealed to the gratitude and esteem of Israel ; but all he says is, "*I am old and well stricken in age.*" He was bordering upon a hundred and ten years old (xxiv. 29 : compare xxiii. 14). What an argument was this wherewith to enforce attention to his words. With what veneration should the counsels of the aged, and especially of aged saints, be received, speaking as they do with the matured experience of the past, and already free from the distracting influences of earth, in the near prospect of heaven. The dying benedictions of Jacob at the close of his pilgrimage—the exhortations of Moses in the land of Moab, before he ascended Mount Abarim to see the promised land and to die—the anxious monitions of the venerable apostle John—the tender remonstrances of Paul the aged, and the earnest reminder of Peter when about shortly to put off his fleshly tabernacle—all these inspired utterances bespeak especial regard from the circumstance of the advanced years of these holy men, nor does the authority of their divine inspiration set aside this human claim to reverence.

with me : I am now upon the decline of life, going toward three-score : surely, now I may claim leave to speak to you freely ; perhaps you may never hear me any more. I intend to return, if please God ; but long before that thou mayest be in hell or heaven."

Such a one, then, so introduces his subject—a prince, a patriot, a conqueror—the governor and head of all the nation—a prophet, too, speaking as the mouthpiece of God—who intimates as he speaks that these are his parting warnings, spoken from the very verge of eternity. Oh, that the burning words of holy oratory, spoken by such a one, at such a time, may hold us, too, as Israel of old, in wrapt attention and silent awe !

The three divisions of Joshua's discourse we may venture to summarize as follows :—

I. (vv. 3—5.)—The LORD's *Goodness* to Israel ; or, The nations of Canaan *a Spoil*.

II. (vv. 6—11).—The LORD's *Claims* upon Israel ; or, The nations of Canaan *a Snare*.

III. (vv. 12, 13).—The LORD's *Wrath* against Israel ; or, The nations of Canaan *a Scourge*.

I.—THE NATIONS A SPOIL.

In the first division of his discourse, Joshua sets forth God's goodness in Israel's past conquest of these nations ; in their present virtual possession of their land, by the appointment of the lots cast in Shiloh ; and in their future complete and actual possession of the whole land from the Jordan to the Mediterranean.

How marked was the hand of God in the course of events ! “*A Syrian, ready to perish,*” was the father of the people. He went down to Egypt with a few, and

“became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous” (Deut. xxvi. 5). Wondrous series of transitions ! This colony in Egypt, when persecuted there, is brought out amid such signs and wonders as shake the earth to its very foundations. See them, next, a wandering horde amid the wilds of Sinai, but there, too, attended by mercies and by miracles ; and now, like a vine of the Lord’s own planting, they are placed in the fruitful hill of His choice. Before the puny sword of a shepherd people, seven mighty nations have fallen ; and Israel dwells in houses that their own hands have not built, amid vineyards and olive-yards they have not planted.

The direct agency of a present God was apparent from first to last. The retreating waters of Jordan, and the open way through the midst of the surging flood ; the walls of the fortress falling *“under themselves”* at the trumpet-blast ; the giant hailstones at Beth-horon ; the portents in the sun and moon ; the hornet-swarm that went before the Israelites ; and the drawn sword of the Captain of the Lord’s host, all these supernatural tokens revealed the character of the war, and showed that the Lord their God had fought for Israel, Who would yet do more for them, until all His promise was fulfilled to the letter.

And now, before we advance to the study of the second section of Joshua’s discourse, let us observe that all these benefits, past, present, and prospective, not-

withstanding their greatness, fall far short of our own privileges in the Gospel, and that our blessed portion in CHRIST is not less due to the direct intervention of Divine grace and Divine power than was Israel's inheritance.

All that mankind has done has been by sin to destroy himself, and bring a curse ; but the work of restoration is all of GOD. The breaking of the holy law was our part ; but the provision of a perfect righteousness, and a full atonement was His part. Have we for ourselves procured the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT ? Could we have opened the gate of everlasting life ? Has mortal man laid up for himself pleasures for evermore at GOD's right hand ? The love of GOD is to be praised for all. Who dictated the precious Bible, with its precepts, promises, and doctrines ? Who appointed Sabbaths—rest days for the body and the soul ? Who reared a Mercy-seat and instituted Prayer ? “*The LORD our GOD*” is still the answer to each question. Reformations, Revivals, Missions, Means of Grace of every kind—all are from His hand. The LORD hath fought for Israel ; and, though the heathen rage, and the kings of the earth set themselves—though Satan and all the powers of darkness be leagued against the Church of JESUS, the LORD our God shall “*expel them, and drive them out,*” and His people shall prevail, until the earth be filled with the knowledge of salvation.

Thus far, then, Joshua's sermon sets forth experiences

that have their counterpart in our own ; but let us hear how he continues.

II.—THE NATIONS A SNARE.

The second division of Joshua's discourse enforces the double duty, commanded in the law of Moses—the negative duty, to stand wholly aloof from the nations (Deut. vii. 2, 16, 23, etc.) ; and the positive duty, to love and cleave unto the LORD their God (Deut. vi. 5). To impress the claims to courageous obedience and grateful love, he once more, and in varied terms, repeats what he has already in his first division set forth relative to the goodness of God, both in the victories that His intervention has already secured them, and in the like victories yet in store.

Such is the general bearing of the paragraph ; but let us more particularly notice some of the clauses—“*Be ye very courageous,*” he says, “*to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses.*” These two graces, courage and obedience, were the armour of proof with which the LORD had armed Joshua himself, when He bade him “*arise and go over Jordan.*” And while Joshua was yet with them, Israel had caught their leader's inspiration, and marched at his side clad with like valour. But now that the veteran captain is about to leave them, he passes on the same Divine mandate to them, in the same terms (compare xxiii. 6 with i. 7). With these two graces he had brought

them into Canaan; and the same two graces are not less needful for themselves,* namely, for the prosecution of the war with the remnant of the nations; for Masius is evidently correct in saying, that Joshua in this discourse, fearing the dangerous associations that would result from a prolonged peace, though he does not openly and directly enjoin the renewal of hostilities, which would have been an unwelcome topic; and, moreover, at that moment, premature, yet lays arguments and considerations before them that show that he contemplated, and wished them to contemplate the necessity of inimical relations with the heathen inhabitants.† *Courage*, then, was needed in Israel to claim as their own what God had assigned to them; and *obedience* to fulfil God's revealed will in the matter.

They were forbidden to turn aside either to the *right* hand, or to the *left*. There is a special meaning in each of these phrases (as we have already explained, p. 22). Two courses were forbidden—to show pity; and to make covenant (Deut. vii. 2). Neither the right hand of mercy might be extended for the grasp of gratitude; nor, again, might the left hand of

* Thus our Captain ere He quits this world of warfare to enter the Canaan above, equips us with the very favours, and sends us on the very mission, which had before belonged to Himself (John xv. 9, 11; xvii. 18, 22).

† That such was the scope of this convention appears from its practical effect. No sooner is Joshua dead than the inquiry is made at the holy oracle, “*Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?*” (Judg. i. 1.)

covetousness be opened to receive the price of a mercenary alliance.

There is a gradation in Joshua's language respecting the dreaded conformity to the heathen around them. He begins by forbidding all contact and intimacy with them. Then he forbids that which would naturally result from this familiarity, namely, the quotation and recognition of their deities (Ps. xvi. 4; Hos. ii. 17); then he refers to the next stage, soon reached in the course of decline—prostration before the shrines of these deities.

“But cleave unto the LORD your GOD,” he says, *“as ye have done unto this day.”* Absolutely, and individually, indeed, they had not done this. For at that very moment there were strange gods here and there among them (xxiv. 23); but nationally, at least, Israel was at this time innocent of apostasy from God; and had zealously repudiated even the semblance of idolatry in the land (xxii. 16), and in this their national purity, thus far, prosperity had attended them.

“Take good heed unto yourselves,” says Joshua, recognizing the perilous probation that God in His mysterious providence had appointed. With this same word of caution (that recurs so often in the Book of Deuteronomy), Moses had similarly warned Israel against this easily besetting sin of conformity to the heathen, and adoption of their idols (Deut. iv. 15, 23; xi. 16; xii. 30). Nor do we, in our day, need less than they this same warning—*“Take good heed unto yourselves!”*

We have elsewhere interpreted the symbolism of the remnant of the Canaanites in the land, as representing the remains of a sinful nature in the believer's heart, that must be driven out from this citadel, and to which no quarter must be granted. But this view does not exclude another application which seems to be required here. In these Canaanites are patterned forth the children of this generation—the men of this present world—who dwell round about the Church of God. Very similar to the language of Joshua is that of the rest of Scripture, in reference to the wicked world of unbelievers. The host of the LORD, not less in Gospel times than then, are bidden to "*separate themselves, and come out from among them.*" Their Saviour tells them, "*Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" "*Love not the world,*" says another Scripture, "*neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" A close parallel to Joshua's exhortation is that of the apostle Paul, who beginning, as Joshua, with an appeal to "*the mercies of GOD,*" similarly goes on to exhort the Romans to devotion to His service, and avoidance of conformity to this world (Rom. xii. 1, 2).

How profitably we might enlarge on this danger that besets the saints of God, from the enticements of the world around them. How we might speak of the world's principles; the world's pleasures and pastimes; and especially of the world's religion, with its counterfeits of the Gospel; but we must press on, for

we have not yet entered upon the third division of Joshua's exhortation.

III.—THE NATIONS A SCOURGE.

Having thus far sought to encourage Israel to duty and obedience by the story of God's past dealings, and by setting before them glorious prospects and gracious promises, Joshua now turns to the darker side of his subject, and plainly states the fearful alternative, declaring all the penalties that shall attend a decline from God, and attachment to these nations.

Notice that Joshua does not contemplate the possibility of a neutral standing. The poor weak heart of man, if detached from either of two powerful magnetic forces, will inevitably fly to the other. If Israel quit Israel's God, they will soon cleave unto the men of Canaan. It is even thus with us. A middle course is out of question. "*No man can serve two masters.*" He that is not for the LORD JESUS is against Him (Matt. vi. 24; xii. 30).

Joshua warns against *Friendship* with the Canaanites as fraught with peril to Israel, but he speaks yet more plainly of *Affinity*, as the danger that is the most seductive, and the most disastrous. Here, too, is a subject to which the young among us, and also their parents and guardians cannot pay too serious attention: and yet how lightly is Marriage often treated! How little prayer is asked for guidance in reference thereto!

How often do mere temporal considerations decide the issue! Vain is the delusion of those who think that they can maintain a walk with God, if they unequally yoke themselves with unbelievers. The scripture before us is in harmony with all scripture, and is confirmed by all experience. They who marry, not "*in the LORD*," will assuredly thereby procure unto themselves hindrances and miseries untold; and they are, moreover, in danger of perishing altogether from among the people of God.

Note the succession of evils wherewith Joshua threatens the Israelites, if they enter into friendship, familiarity, and affinity with the nations of Canaan.

First, their prosperity shall progress no further. These nations shall remain to mar the inheritance that otherwise should have been their own portion. Conquest over the Canaanites, and compromise with the Canaanites are incompatible.

Secondly, the tolerated strangers shall be as snares and traps to entangle them; as scourges to lash them; and as straggling brambles that rebound into the traveller's face and pierce his eyes.

Thirdly, these miseries shall prove but the beginning of sorrows. Trouble shall advance from bad to worse, until Israel is destroyed from off the good land which the *LORD* their God hath given them.

Not less fatal than the dreaded allurement of Israel to Canaanitish associations, is the infatuation of those

whom this world fascinates. Like the spotted leopard, with its graceful form and gentle gait, so is the flattering, fawning world. Who would suspect danger? But cleave thereunto, and ere long its strength and cruelty will appear, and its miserable victims will be torn to pieces in its teeth and talons. Oh, that we may not forget the successive stages of the downfall of those that conform to the Canaanites—first to be hampered and unblest; then to be trapped and snared, scourged and goaded; and last of all to be utterly destroyed!

Nor has Joshua yet ended his discourse, but he adds thereto (vv. 14—16)—

THE CONCLUSION.

Like a master of assemblies, he gathers up all his strength at last, and recapitulates his whole discourse. Once more he points to his grey hairs, and to the open grave that seems to lie but a step before him.

Once more he speaks of mercies granted and promises fulfilled. Once more he tells of the doom of the disobedient.

Like a trumpet-blast that becomes stronger and shriller as it is prolonged, so does his warning note become more intense and thrilling.

In his first (and indeed in his second) division, there were no “Ifs”—all was pure promise. All was sure hope and expectation. Then he spoke of obedience

that would, without doubt, be rendered, and of blessings that would, without doubt, be bestowed.

So now, too, in his solemn conclusion, no condition is named, but he speaks of a coming apostasy, and a consequent and certain vengeance.

What force does his two-fold appeal acquire by the momentary suppression in each case of that "If" (which he sets forth in the intervening third division of his discourse). It is as though he would have each alternative—the glorious prospect; and the gloomy penalty—considered apart. His argument addressed to their hopes; and, again, that addressed to their fears, must not be qualified or interrupted. Each must have its full effect.

With regard to this minatory portion of his exhortation, not twice only, but a third time he rings in their ears the awful clause which tells them how they shall "*perish from off the good land that the LORD has given them*," and with this he terminates.

But note, ere he reaches this terrible climax and close, he cites the faithfulness of God in fulfilling the pledges of His love, and he infers the certainty of a like fulfilment of His threatenings and judgment. God is not wayward and inconsistent with Himself, but, whether it be a reward for the righteous, or woe to the wicked, He will do the thing that has proceeded out of His mouth.

Men would fain separate these two—God's truth in fulfilling His promises of blessing, and God's truth in

executing His curses upon sin : but it cannot be. His very mercies rendered are the seal that certifies the sentence of His wrath. Alas ! Alas ! the very same “*Ebenezer*” that we raise to tell of God’s faithfulness and truth in time past, proclaims the inevitable doom of unsaved souls. Is salvation a fact ? Is an everlasting heaven a reality ? Ah ! the same Bible that tells us this, tells also of destruction, and of an everlasting hell. Be it good or be it evil, not one word of all our God hath spoken hath failed, and not one word shall fail. All shall surely come to pass.

Joshua’s warning was not in vain. As a nation Israel declined, and conformed to the nations around them, and sinned against the LORD until there was no remedy. All the things denounced in Moses’ song, and in Joshua’s solemn peroration, fell upon them : and yet his warning so far had effect that for a whole generation Israel was faithful. The Book of Judges, though it tells of the lamentable backslidings and the consequent calamities of the people, yet in its opening verses tells of a vigorous resistance of the Canaanites, and of the increase of Israel’s inheritance. If the predicted apostasy was not averted, it was at least postponed, and those, at least, who heard these farewell words of the aged Joshua stood firm, and “*served the LORD*” (xxiv. 31). “*All the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua,*” Israel remained “*wholly a right seed*” (Jer. ii. 21).

How shall it be with ourselves? The ultimate progress of corruption may go on: The programme of Prophecy reveals that abounding wickedness shall characterize the latter days; and that, in consequence, great tribulations are at hand:—but, meanwhile, God grant that we who have studied these words of warning, and those of other portions of His word, may, by the restraining grace of God the HOLY GHOST, “*take heed unto ourselves;*” and, pardoned through the blood of JESUS, still love and cleave unto Him, and, like Him, be “*separate from sinners.*” It may be that, thus, we shall be “*hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.*”





LECTURE XVIII.

JOSHUA'S LAST FAREWELL; OR, THE FINAL CONSECRATION OF THE LORD'S HOST AT SHECHEM.

“So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.”

CHAPTER XXIV. 25.



MONG sites hallowed by their sacred historic associations, Shechem holds a very prominent place. Here it was that Abraham first pitched his tent and built an altar to the LORD on entering Canaan (Gen. xii. 6).

In this same neighbourhood, Jacob dwelt with his family (Gen. xxxiii. 18); and here, on the parcel of ground he had bought of Hamor, the father of Shechem, Jacob also had erected an altar to “EL-ELOHE-ISRAEL—*GOD, the GOD of Israel.*” Here, too, he called upon his household to put away the strange gods that were among them. It was here, beneath one of the oaks of Moreh, that their images and their heathenish trinkets were buried in token of their renunciation

of idolatry. But more memorable had this locality recently become, as the scene of Israel's solemn consecration of themselves, and of the land that God had given them, to Him. At Ebal and Gerizim, between which two mountains Shechem lay encradled, God's law and God's worship were formally inaugurated and declared, amid blessings and cursings, to be thenceforth and for evermore the religion of *the Holy Land*.

What wonder that in later ages this same city should be made the seat of government, as we find it in the days of the usurping judge Abimelech, and in the days of Rehoboam? What wonder that the Samaritans should on Gerizim, the mount of blessing, build their temple, and to the days of our **LORD** should regard the spot as the true centre of national devotion?

Here, then, at Shechem, a city of his own tribe, and at no considerable distance from his own city, Timnath-Serah,* a central place, moreover, in reference to the rest of Canaan, Joshua gathers all the tribes of Israel, to appear, as before, by their representatives, that he may once more address them ere he is taken from them.†

* The distance seems to be about fifteen miles, as the crow flies, according to the best maps.

† From the frequent recurrence of the phrase, “*all the people*,” some have supposed that the attendance at this second convention to have been considerably more numerous than at the former. On the similar occasion in Moses' day, not only were the heads of the congregation present, but women, children, and even the lowest menials (Deut. xxix. 10, 11). It is evident that the assembly on this later occasion was very large (see xxiv. 28).

Whether this second exhortation took place at an adjournment of the former gathering, or, at least, soon after that occasion ; whether the later convention was held on the anniversary of the earlier ; or whether after a long interval, it is impossible to infer.

One thing, however, is quite clear, and that is that the two discourses are distinct, and not as some commentators regard them, namely, as a double version of the same, the second being a recapitulation of the first, with fuller details ; for the character of the two discourses is manifestly different. On the former occasion, Joshua summoned Israel to appear before him as their military chief, and though speaking by inspiration, he yet spake in his own name, referring to his own advanced age, and to the part he had taken in having divided out the nations to the sons of Israel to be their inheritance. As one that had such personal claims, he charged them by the mercies of God to cleave unto Him and to be separate from "*these nations.*" Here Joshua summons them in the character of their spiritual shepherd, the successor of Moses. Here he speaks less as the man, and more as the prophet (Numb. xxvii. 18), calling the nation to appear, not before himself, but "*before GOD ;*"* and he opens his address

* It is not necessary to suppose, with some, that the Tabernacle was moved from Shiloh on this occasion. That the ark of the covenant may have accompanied the divinely appointed head of Israel to Shechem is more probable ; but even this is not a necessary hypothesis. The nation is convened, in God's name, to a sacred sanctuary (xxiv. 26), hallowed by every historic association,

with the prophetic formula, “*Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel.*” He himself afterwards refers to the words spoken as “*the words of the LORD which He spake*” (xxiv. 27).

In both discourses the peril of idolatry, and the duty of devotion to God are in view; but while the former discourse treats of this matter in its social, the latter deals with it in its spiritual aspect. *Fraternization with the Canaanites* is the danger directly contemplated in the one, but in the other *the sin of worshipping false gods* is the evil immediately considered. Moreover, as we have seen (p. 317), it is evident from the exhortation to the exercise of courage, and obedience to the law of Moses in reference to “*these nations,*” that the main purpose of Joshua’s first farewell was to awaken the nation from the slumbers of ease and indifference, that they might gird on again the sword of war.

We may, perhaps, make the distinction somewhat clearer by referring to the threefold category of the spiritual adversaries of God’s people—the Flesh, the World, and the Devil. These three are in close conspiracy, and he who yields to one will fall before the other two. Each of these enemies’ sphere of action is illustrated in the three closing chapters of the Book of Joshua. The fair fields of Gilead and Bashan, which were preferred to the land of the sanctuary, are a type

to hear God’s word. So coming, they may well be said to have come to present themselves “*before GOD.*” (See Judg. xi. 11; 1 Sam. x. 17, 19; xv. 33, &c.).

of the enticements that appeal to the carnal appetites : the fascination of the nations that remained in Canaan fitly set forth the bewitching influences of a syren world : while the worship of the gods of the heathen we are plainly told in Scripture was actually devil-worship. May we be armed at all points, and especially beware of the god of this world when he points to the glittering glory of earthly treasures and says, "*All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me !*"

We have, then, in Joshua's second exhortation, a charge to Israel, designed to lead them to a renewed consecration of themselves to the entire service of God, and to the utter renunciation of all other gods. If this be distinctly apprehended as the object of this convention in Shechem, the bearing of the successive paragraphs before us will become evident.

The chapter falls into five sections (not including the first nor the twenty-eighth verses, which relate to the gathering and dismissal of the tribes). These sections we may thus summarize—

- I. (vv. 2—13).—**GOD'S THREE-FOLD MERCIES.**
- II. (vv. 14, 15).—**JOSHUA'S THREE-FOLD APPEAL.**
- III. (vv. 16—25).—**ISRAEL'S THREE-FOLD COVENANT.**
- IV. (vv. 22, 26, 27).—**A THREE-FOLD AFFIDAVIT TO ISRAEL'S COVENANT.**
- V. (vv. 29—33).—**A THREE-FOLD SEAL TO GOD'S PROMISES.**

I.—GOD'S THREE-FOLD MERCIES.

In the discourse recorded in the twenty-third chapter, as often as thirteen times Joshua directed the thoughts of his hearers heavenward, repeating the phrase "*The LORD your GOD.*" (Compare Deut. xxiii. 5). Not less noticeable is the reiteration of the personal pronoun "*I*" in the paragraph before us, which will be found to occur seventeen times.*

GOD sets forth His mercies under three heads, tracing the history of His people through three periods, and in three countries. Thus there is an implied contrast between His goodness and power, and the impotency of the gods of all the ancient mythologies. The object of this review is to exhibit Him as the only giver of every blessing, and to disparage the false deities of the heathen as the patrons of failure, ignominy, and ruin.

1. (vv. 2—4).—Israel's *Enlargement* is the first mercy mentioned. There was once an unknown idolater,† dwelling in the midst of idolaters, far away

* Compare Amos ii. 9—11, where there is a like repetition of the word "*I.*" Note the recurrence of the word "*Thou*" in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah, also in the seventy-fourth Psalm, vv. 13—17.

† It has been inferred from Laban's words, Gen. xxxi. 53, that Abraham and his family worshipped the true God before his call: but the inference is unfounded. Laban's words relate to the fact recorded, Gen. xi. 31, that Terah himself conformed to the charge recorded, Gen. xii. 1, and himself headed the caravan on its way to Haran from Ur. Masius more correctly says on the

in Mesopotamia, namely, in Ur of the Chaldees, a place to the east of the Euphrates.* To such a one, Abram by name, the true God spake, and bade him quit his native land to venture forth upon a journey of faith. Led by God to Canaan, after a sojourn by the way at Haran, Abram comes before us as an old man as good as dead, and without an heir. From that apparently sapless stock there shoots out young scions, and, lo! ere a few generations have passed, Abraham's seed is found as numerous as the stars of heaven. Let Esau's numerous progeny, the great nation of the Edomites in Idumæa; let Israel's thousands, too, attest God's gift of offspring promised to Abraham.

2. (vv. 5—7).—Israel's *Exodus* was no less signal a mercy from God's gracious hand. According to the prophecy of evil made to the man of faith in the moment that his faith faltered (Gen. xv. 8, 13), Abraham's seed became “*a stranger in a land that was not*

words, “*I took Abraham*”—“I think that the word ‘*I took*’ is here used instead of ‘*I called out*,’ in order to call attention and admiration to the goodness of God, who, as it were, laid His hand upon Abram, and drew him to Himself, not merely when he had no desires after God, but when, as a worshipper of hostile deities, he was actually turning away and departing from God. Out of the darkest shades of error God brought him forth into the light of eternal truth.”

* *Ur of the Chaldees* has been variously identified with Orchœ, Mugheir, and Edessa (now Urfah). The designation, “*on the other side of the flood*,” seems decisive against either of the two former; while the third place is not in Chaldæa at all.

theirs,” and was in affliction there four hundred years (dating from the time of the prediction): but in the fourth generation the yoke of the tyrant was to be broken; nor could all the gods of Egypt withstand God’s predetermined purpose of grace. The deities of Egypt were humbled before the God of Israel. While the world lasts the wonders that God wrought in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, will not cease to be celebrated.

3. (vv. 8—12).—Israel’s *Entrance into Canaan*, and the conquests that preceded and that succeeded the miraculous passage of the Jordan, were the consummation of the mercies of God to Israel. Various nationalities, exponents of the idolatries of Syria, were humbled before His people. When the tedious sojourn in the wilderness was drawing to its close, Sihon, the king of the Amorites, and after him Og, the giant king of Bashan, led out their armies against Israel: but only to fall before Israel’s God. After their defeat and destruction, Balak, king of Moab, sought, by hiring Balaam, the soothsayer, to procure a potent spell against Israel. Might not a magician of name and note, thought Balak, by offering up such votive sacrifices, in combination with his wonted incantations, as might be acceptable to the God of Israel, conciliate His favour in behalf of the Moabites? But in vain were all enchantments: three times, and again a fourth time, the curse was turned into a blessing: yea, «

divine inspiration animated the heathen magician; and the mercenary, temporizing Balaam became on this occasion a prophet of the true GOD.* In the fearful rout and slaughter of Balak's Midianitish allies, we see the disaster devised against Israel turned upon their enemies. Balaam himself, miserable man, though he prayed in ecstatic exultation to "*die the death of the righteous*," fell among the slain (xiii. 22).

After the entrance of Israel into Canaan, the course of conquest had been continued. God was still seen victorious over all gods. It was not Israel's bow, nor Israel's might that gave them their successes, but God alone (Ps. xliiv. 3). It was He only who delivered first the men of Jericho, and then the whole body of the seven nations† into Israel's hand. To make this more plain, God had sent before the human legions a contemptible, and yet a terrible army: it was by swarms of hornets, winging their way in Israel's van;‡

* Dr. Edersheim, whose view of Balaam's prophetic standing is here adopted, remarks that the word *Kosem*, by which Scripture designates him, is the distinctive term for heathen soothsayers, in opposition to the prophets of the LORD.

† For although no conjunction intervenes at ver. 11, it is plain that "*the men of Jericho*," and the nations enumerated are to be distinguished.

‡ From the fact that these hornets are not mentioned in the history of the war, it has been inferred that the language is figurative (as at Isa. vii. 18), and that all that is intended is the terror of the LORD. What, then, shall we say of the palmer-worm, the locust, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar of the prophet Joel? Were these all metaphors? But, as Bochart says (*vide* Poole's *Synopsis* on Exod. xxiii. 28)—"What is plainly stated, is not

and not by Joshua's generalship, that the two great Amorite powers were dislodged, * namely, King Adoni-zedek, head of the southern, and King Jabin, head of the northern confederacy.† The wealth of Israel, too, was all God's gift. While the houses they inherited, and the vineyards from which they gathered clusters, were being prepared for them, they were far away wandering in the desert of Sinai, or, it may be, were infants crying for food to their oppressed parents in Egypt.

From first to last, Israel's enlargement, Israel's deliverances, Israel's conquests, and Israel's prosperity were the mercies of God, and not of their own acquiring; and in every case the blessings they enjoyed were, as it were, wrested out of the hands of the gods of other nations.

II.—JOSHUA'S THREEFOLD APPEAL.

And now, the catalogue of Divine favours ended, afterwards explained by a figure, and that an unusual figure. If we may imagine metaphors *ad libitum* in the midst of plain narration, all the histories of Scripture will be pulled to pieces."

* See note, page 185.

† This is apparently the sense of the phrase, "*the two kings of the Amorites*," rather than as at ix. 10; for it was in reference to the Canaanites, west of Jordan, the scourge of hornets was foretold (Exod. xxiii. 28; Deut. vii. 20). Moreover, the events referred to have been hitherto chronologically arranged, thus we can hardly suppose a *résumé* at this point. See also, in confirmation of this view, ver. 18. The term "*king*" is continually used, when the whole nation under him is intended (xii. 7, &c.).

Joshua as it were steps down from the higher to the lower elevation of inspiration, and speaks no longer as the mouthpiece of the Lord, but once more he addresses the people in his own person; and sets the conclusion of the matter before them under three heads:—

1. He exhorts them to fear and serve this great, and this good God. “Now, therefore,” says he, drawing the inference, which demonstration proves to be according to reason; which gratitude claims as the most binding of debts; which God’s authority demands as the most necessary of duties; which even expediency indicates as the highest of interests; and which every motive and every consideration constrain and compel Israel to accept—“Now, therefore, fear the *LORD*”—ever live, that is, with a solemn regard for His presence and His approval—“and serve the *LORD*,” publicly honouring Him in the observance of His appointed ordinances; but still more serve Him by the devotion of a holy life; and that not feignedly or only in outward show, but “*in sincerity and truth*;” nor, again, with a double heart that hankers still after the antiquities of Chaldaean mythology, or the calves of Egypt, but “*put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD*.”

2. And, now, to manifest in yet clearer light that

the service of God is a reasonable service, and to show the utter folly of idolatry, Joshua, in the gravest irony, upholds the alternative for the adoption of the people, and mocks the apostasy, the latent germs of which he knew too well were in the hearts of the great assembly before him. His method may be compared with that which Elijah employed when he called upon Israel to decide for Baal, if indeed he were God, ridiculing meanwhile the absent attributes of deity in the so-called god (1 Kings xviii. 27); or to that of the prophet Isaiah, where he exposes the intellectual degradation of the idol-maker (Isa. xliv. 9—20).

“*If*,” says he, “*it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD*”—that is to say, if all the catalogue of mercies just laid before them proves nothing; if all Israel’s conquests and deliverances, if their progress and their prosperity do but prove after all the badness of God’s service, then, says he, choose between the remaining more honourable and more advantageous systems. Rake out from among the ruins and relics of the far east some more august and powerful deity—find out what Terah and what Abraham worshipped in the days of their obscurity and their ignorance, and set that up as the noble object of your adoration, whether it be Bel or Nebo, or it may be some winged bull or huge hawk-headed genius. Or, if this course does not commend itself to you, go to the cringing remnant of the conquered Amorites, and ask them to instruct you in the cruel and impure rites and ordinances of Moloch and Ash-

taroth and all their gods and goddesses. There is the keenest satire in the last clause of the sentence, “*the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwelt,*” calling attention as it does to the fact that the divinities of Canaan had not been able to preserve their worshippers from extermination and banishment before the God of Israel. These same words also would remind Joshua’s hearers that it was because of the moral corruption that the religious systems of the heathen licensed, and even promoted, that the inhabitants had been driven out.

3. And then, having, both with tender love and with withering scorn, set forth the two alternatives, he declares his own resolute decision in words which should be the motto for every ruler, and for every householder—

“*As for Me, and My House,
We will serve the LORD!*”

With such a sentence, sublime in its very simplicity, he separates himself and his from all idolaters, and leaves them to their fate—With such a sentence he closes his appeal.

This is the true order of the growth of piety. First, *Individual Consecration*; then follows *Family Control*; and then the third stage in the gradation, namely, *Public Influence*, will not be lacking. Happy the household, when the father leads the way to the altar of God,

himself a living sacrifice ; happy, too, the state that has such a one at the helm of government !

Vain is the thought that this order can be inverted ; and that he who has not the rule over his own spirit can guide his family ; or, again, that he can carry weight in the Church of God who cannot govern in his own home (See 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5).

Joshua's bold language suggests the personal inquiry for each one of us—Am I prepared to witness a like good confession ? Can I relax my grasp on the vanities of a fleeting age, and lifting one hand to heaven, and laying the other upon my breast, say with holy Paul, as I look up to Heaven and to God, “ *Whose I am, and Whom I serve ;* ” or with the hoary-headed chieftain and warrior of Israel before us, “ *AS FOR ME—I will serve the LORD ?* ”

But let us not lightly pass by Joshua's declaration that *his house*, too, should likewise serve the LORD. Let us well note this claim of authority in spiritual matters in his own family.

It was a like acknowledgment of paternal responsibility, and assumption of paternal authority that was the condition of Abraham's blessing—GOD knew him in this matter, namely, that he would “ *command his children, and his household after him,* ” and that they would “ *keep the way of the LORD* ” (Gen. xviii. 19). It was the abdication of his parental right to restrain his sons that brought a curse upon Eli's house (1 Sam. iii. 13).

No growing sons or daughters must be allowed any voice in favour of a laxer rule of doctrine and of discipline in spiritual things, than the godly head of a house in his mature judgment has established. No indulgent mother must be heard, when she pleads for license to conformity to this world. Nor is it any undue interference with the spiritual liberties of others, to require that the servants of the house should on Sabbaths attend the public means of grace, and be present at the daily family devotions.

Did our subject permit, how would we, with Joshua's words before us, enlarge upon these points, and especially urge the duty and the privilege of gathering the household day by day for the reading of the Word of God and prayer.* Blessed exercise! Days thus begun, and thus ended, will, if the service be real and heartfelt, be truly prosperous days.

III.—ISRAEL'S THREEFOLD COVENANT.

We proceed to the history of the covenant which Israel now renews with God. At Gilgal there had been a great national consecration. Here in Shechem, namely, at Ebal and Gerizim, there had been a second

* The importance of this matter, and the forcible and yet delicate way in which it has been handled by Pastor Recolin, of the Reformed Church at Paris, in a recent volume of Sermons (Paris : Grassart : 1876), will, it is hoped, render the translation, which will be found at the end of this volume (Appendix C) acceptable to the reader.

and still more solemn national consecration: but, once more, ere he dies, Joshua would celebrate a third general consecration of all the LORD's host to His service. It was for this purpose that all Israel was called once more to the sacred spot, where still on the mountain side the plastered tables and their inscriptions proclaimed the mind and will of God (See pp. 195—198).

Herein Joshua followed Moses, one of whose last acts was to call all Israel in his day to make a covenant with God (Deut. xxix., xxx., xxxi.). Like renewals of the national covenant occurred at later periods of Israel's history.*

Often does it behove God's people to renew their covenant, and repeat their vows. Each birthday, each New Year's Day, each change of place or station, each earnest sermon heard, each solemn visitation of God's judgment, should bring us to a new dedication of ourselves to Him. The LORD's SUPPER—what is it but a *sacrament*, or *oath*—a *pledge of fealty*? *Sacramentum* was the word used for a soldier's oath of service in the Roman army. Oh, that we, who now read of Israel's hearty response to the call of God and of His servant Joshua, may have grace to consecrate ourselves anew to be henceforth wholly His!

With a threefold repetition had their fathers, beneath the frowning heights of Sinai, pledged themselves to obey the LORD (Exod. xix. 3—8). “*All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.*” This was the answer of the

* See references at p. 189, Lecture XI.

people to the *LORD* before the law was given. And then, again, a second time, after the giving of the law, they confirmed their assurance, saying, “*All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.*” Nor was this all; but upon hearing the law read from the book of the covenant, amid solemn sacrifices and the sign of sprinkled blood they pledged themselves for the third time, and declared, “*All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient*” (Exod. xxiv. 3—8).

Joshua in like manner obtains a threefold promise.

As soon as he has closed his lips, setting forth his own decision to serve the *LORD*, the people answer by protesting against the service of other gods; and after summarizing the words of God that Joshua had delivered to them, they conclude with the unanimous resolution, “*Therefore, will we also serve the LORD, for He is our GOD.*” This is the first pledge.

“*Ye cannot serve the LORD,*” says Joshua, “*for He is an holy GOD and a jealous GOD; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.*” An old and wary spiritual leader will not lightly receive the ardent professions of piety that burst forth the moment the exhortation is concluded. Joshua probes to the very heart of his audience, and teaches them that decision for God is not so easy a matter as they may, perhaps, be ready to suppose. Is there not in some of the great congregation before him a lurking admiration, or, at least, a toleration of other forms of religion than the worship of JEHOVAH? If it be so, it is vain to think

to call themselves God's servants ; for He will endure no double-mindedness.

Joshua's grave countenance, in the midst of Israel's eager professions, is like that of the **LORD JESUS**, Who, when on one occasion the fickle multitudes were thronging after Him, turned Himself to them to explain what following Him involved, namely, the forsaking of all else, and the bearing of the cross. Had they counted the cost ? Were they prepared to complete the edifice begun ; and to prosecute the campaign against the king of this world, under His banner ? (Luke xiv. 25—33). “All or none,” these are the **LORD**’s conditions, when He says, “*Follow Me.*” No lukewarm affection, no divided service will He tolerate ; no mingling of the cause of God and mammon. Better were it to fall among His open enemies, than to inherit the greater damnation of secret traitors within His camp.

But to return—Denying Joshua's denial, again the people pledge themselves. The pent-up stream breaks forth with yet stronger impetuosity, and Joshua's repression of Israel's devotion does but elicit a louder acclamation, “*Nay, but we will serve the LORD.*”

Joshua now repeats the words of Jacob, addressed to his household at this very spot, in which he had summoned them to “*put away their strange gods from among them*, and make a full surrender of their hearts to God (Gen. xxxv. 2—4). Ah ! the severity of Joshua's tone was the severity of a loving solicitude. He was not the one to speak without need of speaking. Though,

as a nation, Israel was faithful, Joshua knew that bitter leaven was already working among them.

Let those who deal with anxious souls not forget to enforce the necessity that Joshua here declares to renounce all idols and incline the heart to God. Salvation and sin cannot both be kept. All strange gods must be put away, or the covenant is invalidated.*

“And the people said unto Joshua,” now for the third time ratifying their full purpose of heart, *“The LORD our GOD will we serve, and His voice will we obey.”*

So, then, the covenant is struck. *“That day,”* in Shechem, Joshua *“set them a statute and ordinance.”* In other words, he notified this attitude of service and obedience as the condition of prosperity and blessing (See Exod. xv. 25, 26).

IV.—A THREEFOLD AFFIDAVIT TO ISRAEL’S COVENANT.

Joshua, when receiving the thrice-pledged declaration of Israel’s fealty to the LORD their GOD, cites three

* While taking heed against spiritual idolatry, such as worship of the world, its pleasures, its emoluments, its honours, and the like; let us not omit to notice the literal idolatry that is becoming more and more prevalent among professing Christians. Let us see well to it that, if there be any idolatrous ornaments, emblems, or effigies, whether it be upon our persons, upon the walls of our houses, or in our sanctuaries, all these be unhesitatingly put away from us. The parting words of the disciple whom JESUS loved accord with those of Joshua here, charging us, not less than those who in his day dwelt among idolatrous associations,—*“Little children, keep yourselves from idols!”*

witnesses, and, as it were, lays up three documents, each constituting, so to speak, an affidavit of the covenant made.

1. The first is the memory of the transaction in the minds of the people themselves. Each man in the great crowd shall be witness against each, if they in any wise go back. The occasion and all its circumstances constitute a fact, the whole bearing of which centres in this declaration for God and against all other gods. “*Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD to serve Him;*” and they said, “*We are witnesses.*” Ah ! and in the great Judgment Day, were there no other witnesses against the wicked, out of their own mouths should they be condemned ; and were there no other evidence, the records of their own memories should leave them without excuse.

2. Joshua himself, moreover, puts the whole matter into writing, even as we have it here before us in this last chapter. Moses, on both occasions of his compacting a covenant with Israel, had duly entered the account of the same into the pages of the Scripture (Exod. xxiv. 4 ; Deut. xxxi. 24, 26). Such records were solemnly laid up “*in the side,*” that is, if our view (see p. 58) be correct, in an outer compartment “*of the ark*” of God. Should Israel deny that their threefold pledge of allegiance was given, “*these words,*” penned by Joshua’s own hand, are evidence against them.

Alas, that the very Gospel that brings blessing to the believer should constitute a witness against the unbeliever! And yet so it is. Here are recorded the terms of that great salvation which was offered to him, and which, nevertheless, he rejected. "*The words which I have spoken,*" says the Saviour, "*the same shall judge him in the last day.*"

3. But there is another testimony that shall witness against Israel if they apostatize. As Moses had set up twelve pillars in Horeb, in token of the covenant made there (Exod. xxiv. 4), so Joshua erects a monument of the covenant made now, namely, "*a great stone,*" which he places beneath the oak in Shechem,* "*that was by the Sanctuary of the LORD.*" This Sanctuary was doubtless some edifice reared to mark the site of Abraham's first altar, and of that of Jacob, already mentioned (p. 326). Such was the monument, such its position, and such its bearing. "*Behold,*" says Joshua, "*this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD, which He spake unto us: it shall be, therefore, a witness unto you, lest ye deny your GOD.*"

In such a spirit the prophets appeal to the heavens and the earth, the mountains and the hills, to hear the LORD's controversy with His people (Deut. xxxii. 1;

* This oak (sometimes in our Bibles rendered "*plain*"), is five times referred to in Scripture—Gen. xii. 6; xxxv. 4; Deut. xi. 30; Judg. ix. 6; and also here, Josh. xxiv. 26.

Ps. l. 4; Jer. ii. 12; vi. 19; Mic. vi. 1, 11; &c.; see also Hab. ii. 2): and, following their example, how many a Gospel minister might call upon the very walls and columns of the church in which he has preached to testify to the faithful appeals to the conscience; the arguments; the declarations of the love of God in CHRIST; the "*exceeding great and precious promises;*" and the solemn warnings that he has delivered to hearers more cold and more stony than those silent witnesses themselves. God grant that the place where we have heard of JESUS may not thus bear record against us, but rather be a sweet memorial of the day when we turned to the LORD in a covenant that was never to be broken; a hallowed spot, marking the birth-place of our souls, or, at least, the place where our covenant with God was renewed, and our hearts were cheered by sweet revelations of His grace!

Beloved readers, who with us have studied the record of all God's goodness to Israel of old, and who therein have seen foreshadowed somewhat of His greater favours to ourselves, we invite you, ere our subject closes, to make covenant with the same LORD GOD of Israel. JESUS, the better Joshua, is our Mediator. The terms of the gracious covenant are all complete. Oh, turn not away! None other can help in time, and to all eternity. The world with its gilded show will deceive. No other religious system will avail. Come, then, let us devote ourselves to Him and to His service!

Will you turn away from one so kind? Can you offer this gracious FATHER your hatred or neglect, and cleave to sin and Satan. Or will you keep back half the heart for earthly idols!

But, oh, make the covenant in sincerity and truth, with heartfelt repentance—with deep humility, and yet with unhesitating resolution. GOD the HOLY GHOST incline your hearts hereunto, and enable you to adhere thereto! Above all, enter the covenant of peace in the name, merits, and mediation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Through His great atonement alone is this free grace to guilty sinners offered.

The LORD grant that out of each heart that has pondered these pages, the response may flow forth, "*The LORD our GOD will we serve, and His voice,*" sweetly speaking to us in the Gospel of salvation, "*will we obey.*" The LORD grant that this very volume may not be "*for a testimony*" against any into whose hands it may have fallen, for JESUS CHRIST's sake. Amen!

V.—A THREEFOLD SEAL TO GOD'S PROMISES.

The Book of Joshua closes with the mention of three burials. In the peaceful graves of three of God's saints we seem to see three seals to the truth of God's Word. These holy men once served Him among strange nations, but now their bones are laid within the borders of the promised land.

1. Joshua dies and is buried in Timnath-serah.* As we said in our first lecture, we look in vain in the Book of Joshua for a personal biography; but, oh, what a biography is comprised in the title that belonged to Moses,† but which now for the first time is accorded also to Joshua, "*the Servant of the LORD*" (Exod. xiv. 31; Numb. xii. 7, 8; Deut. xxxiv. 5; Josh. i. 1, 13; viii. 31, 33; xi. 12; xii. 6; xiii. 8; xiv. 7; xviii. 7; xxii. 2, 4, 5; 2 Kings xviii. 12; xxi. 8; 2 Chron. i. 3; xxiv. 6, 9; Neh. x. 29; Ps. cv. 26; Dan. ix. 11; Mal. iv. 4; Rev. xv. 3)! Of little consequence is it that the personal details of the hundred and ten years of Joshua's life are not more fully given, when all is summed up in such a designation, "*Joshua, the son of Nun, the Servant of the LORD*" (xxiv. 29; Judg. ii. 8).

2. The next grave named is that of the head of Joshua's tribe, even that of Joseph himself. Strong in faith, Joseph foresaw the fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and gave commandment to his father's house to carry up his bones from Egypt, when God should bring them forth thence. There, then, his bones were laid in his father's field in Shechem.

* An ancient tomb has been discovered at Tibneh by the Palestine Exploration Society, which is, with considerable probability, identified as that of Joshua.

† It is interesting to connect the two designations of Joshua, that of i. 1, "*Moses' minister*," and that now imposed upon him. See Matt. xxv. 21.

It may be that Joshua's own burial put his fellow-tribesmen in mind of this hitherto neglected trust.

3. Eleazar, too, dies, and is buried in Mount Ephraim. The faithful priest of God—the man bereaved of father, and of brethren, through the **LORD**'s displeasure (Numb. iii. 2; xx. 28)—himself is spared to serve the **LORD**, and to die in peace in Canaan.

Thus ends the ministry of the men by whom the land was divided. Thus were their bodies, and that of Joseph likewise, committed to the earth, there to sleep until the resurrection morning: their glorified spirits meanwhile joining the throng of the redeemed above. Such was the close of their career, and such shall, ere long, be our close. "*And he died,*" is the clause that must terminate the biography even of a Methuselah. Rulers, like Joshua, must die. Princes and benefactors, like Joseph, must die. God's ministers, too, like Eleazar, must die. The congregations among whom the servants of the **LORD** have laboured, must die. Preachers and hearers; authors and readers—all must soon quit the earthly scene. Oh, blessed end of those whose ministry God owns! More glorious far than sculptured marble shall be their monument, if those that overlive them serve the **LORD**. Happy, happy shall be the mutual greetings in the eternal Canaan, in the presence of JESUS, our Joshua, among all the **LORD**'s Host!

APPENDICES.





APPENDIX A.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD ; OR, THE DEITY OF CHRIST THE DOCTRINE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

EXTRACT FROM A SERMON BY THE LATE PROFESSOR GAUSSEN,
OF GENEVA.*

“And when Gideon perceived that He was an Angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O LORD GOD ! for because I have seen an Angel of the LORD face to face.

“And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee : fear not : thou shalt not die.

“Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it JEHOVAH-shalom.”

JUDGES vi. 22—24.

THE harvest had begun, when the news was spread that the Bedouin army, countless as the sand on the sea shore, was crossing the fords of Jordan, and was marching towards the valley of Jezreel. Concealed in the wine-press Gideon was hurriedly securing his corn, parting the grain from the chaff to

* Published, in the form of a tract, by the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, and sold at their House, 16, Lincoln's-inn Fields.

secure it from pillage, when, all at once, lifting up his eyes he perceived, beneath an oak that grew before his father's house, a stranger seated, whose august and yet gentle mien impressed and engaged him. And now the visitor addresses him, and says, "*The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour!*" Deeply moved, and already aware that, both in the aspect and in the voice of this strange Being, there is a fascination that is more than human, Gideon promptly replies to this effect, "*'The LORD is with us!'*—Ah! would it not be more true to say, that all these evils have befallen us because the *LORD* is no longer with us?"

Have you ever noticed the utterances of Him who spoke with Gideon? Have you observed how His language becomes more and more elevated as the discourse is continued? Have you, moreover, remarked how the Scripture, after introducing Him as "*the Angel of the LORD*," goes on to call Him by the very name of **JEHOVAH**?—"And the *LORD* looked upon him, and said, *Go in this thy might*,"—that is to say, Go in the faith which this thy answer betokens, and in the strength which that faith will supply,—Go, "*and thou shalt save Israel: have not I sent thee?*" Gideon pleads his inability, but "*the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.*"

Endeavour now in imagination to place yourselves in the situation of this pious Israelite. Endeavour to realize the emotions that would overwhelm him.

"My God," would he say in thought, "and who then is this whose appearance transfuses me with awe, and who can in Thy presence use such language as this? To the depths of my soul I am moved by the overpowering majesty of His accents, and by the inexplicable influence of His glance. Is this a man?—But '*never man spake as this Man.*' Is He then an angel from heaven?—But His language is not even that of an angel; for did He not say to me, '*The LORD is with thee!*' and did He not go on to say, '*Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt conquer the Midianites!*'—'*Have not I sent thee?*' Can it, then, be my God!—Oh, pardon the boldness of the thought!—Can it be

Thyself? Hast Thou, my LORD and my God, revealed Thyself to one so humble, and condescended to appear to me, as Thou didst once of old to our father Abraham in the plains of Mamre? Is it then possible that Gideon's eyes have seen that Angel of the LORD, Who appeared to Moses at mount Horeb, and Who led our fathers through the desert?"

Well may we think that, amid such reflections as these, the whole spirit of Gideon would be stirred, and that his heart would beat quickly with emotion.

And now what will he do? He will beg the speaker to show him who He is: He will ask of Him a sign. "Oh, if it be true that it is Thou that dost address me, my God, my Comforter, my everlasting portion, then, '*Lo, I come to do Thy will, O GOD!*' For life or for death, I give myself to Thee; Gideon is Thine. '*Speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth*' (Ps. xl. 6—8; 1 Sam. iii. 10)!"

"*And He said unto Him,*" continues the sacred narrative, "*If now I have found grace in Thy sight, then shew me a sign that Thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto Thee, and bring forth my meat offering, and set it before Thee. And He said, I will tarry until Thou come again.*"

Inspired with elevated thoughts, and already conscious of the lofty mission that seemed to lie before him, Gideon retires within his father's house. He speaks not a word to any one of what he has just heard: it is a matter between his own soul and his God. Alas! were he to communicate his experience, there is none in the family of Joash that could enter into it, for the God of Israel is no longer worshipped there.

He hastens to prepare his offering, such an offering as it was usual in those days to present at the tabernacle, namely, a young kid of the goats, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour, which was as much as the scarcity in his home would admit of; unleavened, because the Levitical law forbade any other to be presented upon the altar. The time seemed long to him in his haste to return to the oak to witness the miraculous token he had asked for, and which appeared to be in a manner promised to him.

And now, while the chosen instrument of God, with inexpressible sensations and expectations, is endeavouring to establish his convictions as to who this wondrous Being is who has revealed Himself, let us also who read the narrative devote a few minutes to the investigation of the question which must have powerfully exercised his mind, and to which it is equally important for us also to find a satisfactory answer.

Who was this individual? Was it a man? Was it a created angel? or—Was it God Himself?

The Scripture in verses 11 and 12 calls Him “*the Angel*,” or messenger, “*of the LORD*;” and then in the verses which follow does not hesitate to give Him the name of the *LORD*, or JEHOVAH. It is the *LORD* who looks upon Gideon; it is the *LORD* who says to him, “*Have not I sent thee?*”

Possibly if this event were without any parallel in Scripture we might be left in doubt; but we find, both in the Old and in the New Testament, so many analogous scenes and similar descriptions, that we may deduce certain simple arguments, which we will now briefly set forth, to enable us to form both an accurate and also a certain estimate in reference to this important subject.

I.

The first of these arguments is not open to dispute. It is this: Wherever in the Bible the appearance of this mysterious Angel occurs, whom the HOLY GHOST designates as “*The Angel of the LORD*,”* “*The Angel of His presence*,” (Isa. lxiii. 9), or “*The Angel of the Covenant*,” you will continually find that He attributes to Him all the incommunicable titles of Almighty God,

* Some translators render the phrase, “*The Angel JEHOVAH*.” See Gen. xxii. 15; xxxi. 11, 13; xxxii. 24—30; xviii. ; xix. ; xvi. 7—13; Exod. iii. 2—5; iv. 5; (xii. 12); xiii. 21; [xiv. 19, 24;—G. W. B.] xix. 9, 19, 24; [compare Acts vii. 38;] xxii. 20—23; xxxii. 9—11; Deut. xxxii. 16; Josh. v. 13—15, and vi. 1—3 [see, however, note pp. 120, 121.—G. W. B.]; Lev. xvi. 2; Judges vi. 11, 14—33; ii. 1; xiii. 18; 1 Chron. xxi. 15—18; Isa. lxiii. 9, 10, 11, 14; Mal. iii. 1; Dan. iii. 25; Ezek. i. 26, 28, 1—6; Rev. i. 12—15.

and not His titles only, but also His attributes and His works ; yes, and not only His names, His attributes, and His works, but moreover the adoration which everywhere else GOD claims as due to Himself alone.

Only to quote a very few instances out of many,—It is thus that we may see that the Angel of the LORD who appeared to the patriarch Abraham in the plains of Mamre (Gen. xviii.), and Who came to announce that Sarah should bear a son, is constantly called by the name of the LORD, and Himself speaks throughout in the character of Almighty God.

We may hear the Angel of the LORD, who appeared to Jacob in Mesopotamia, say to this patriarch, “ *I am the GOD of Bethel, I am the LORD, the GOD of Abraham thy father, and the GOD of Isaac.* ” *

We may hear the Angel of the LORD Who appeared to Moses on mount Horeb (Exod. iii.) declare, “ *I am the GOD of thy fathers, I am He whose name is I AM. Go unto thy brethren and let them know that the LORD hath appeared unto thee.* ” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

We shall see that the Angel of the LORD, who led the children of Israel during the journey through the wilderness, is called by the great name of JEHOVAH ; and we shall hear the Angel or Messenger of God, who spake unto Moses on Sinai (Acts vii. 30), pronounce these words, “ *Hear, O Israel, I am the LORD thy GOD, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other god before my face* ” (Exod. xix., xx. 1—3).

And if we would gather further examples, the testimony is still the same, when this same Angel of the LORD’s presence manifests Himself to Hagar in the wilderness,† to Joshua at the walls of Jericho (Josh. v. 13—15;) to the parents

* Compare Gen. xxxi. 11—13 ; xxviii. 11—22 ; xxxv. 7—15 ; xlvi. 15,*16 ; xxxii. 24, 28, 30 : Hos. xii. 4, 5.

† Gen. xvi. 13. After “ *the Angel of the LORD* ” has been named throughout in the narrative, we read that “ *she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou GOD seest me.* ”

of Samson in the fields of Zorah,* and to the Israelites at Bochim.†

II.

We now come to our second argument. If there is one truth which is guarded with especial jealousy in the Old Testament above other truths, it is the doctrine of the Unity of the Godhead. It is by this great fundamental dogma that the Jews, throughout their national existence, have differed from all the nations of the world. Everywhere else men have worshipped everything else except God. Among them nought else but God has been the object of worship. And, might we speak of Moses as we should of any mere human legislator, we should say that the leading idea, the chief corner stone of his religious system is this, “*Hear, O Israel, the LORD thy GOD is one LORD!*” To this principle he continually recurs—he is jealous over it with a godly jealousy.

“*Is there a god beside Me? yea, there is no god; I know not any. I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no god beside Me: a just GOD and a Saviour; I am GOD and there is*

* Judges viii. Here the Angel of the LORD who appeared to Manoah, and who is also called by the inspired writer, “*JEHOVAH*,” appropriates the sacred name which the *HOLY GHOST* (in *Isaiah*) assigns to the only Son of God, namely, where he announces that “*A virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, ’ Whose name shall be IMMANUEL, Who shall be called “WONDERFUL, the mighty GOD, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace”*” (*Isa. vii. 14; ix. 5*). “*Why asketh thou thus after My name?*” says the Angel of the *LORD* to Manoah, “*seeing it is WONDERFUL; and when the Angel of the LORD ascended to heaven in the flame of the altar, Manoah knew that He was an Angel of the LORD; and they fell on their faces to the ground; and Manoah said, We shall surely die, because we have seen GOD.*”

† Judges ii. 1–5. “*In all the affliction of His people the LORD was afflicted,*” says *Isaiah*, “*and the Angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them*” (*Isa. lxiii. 9*).

none else. Look unto Me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am GOD, and there is none else." *

III.

Our third argument is a direct deduction from the two former, and is almost coincident with them. It is this:—

The Being who, in the Bible, adopts the titles, the attributes, the works, and even the adoration that belong to God alone, cannot be a mere creature.

"*There is none like the LORD*," is it often repeated. "*I am GOD, and there is none like Me. My glory will I not give unto another*" (Isa. xlvi. 8). He is "*a jealous GOD*" (Exod. xx. 5). The angels hide their faces and fear before Him. Is there a single one of them, in heaven or upon earth, who would dare to usurp language such as that which Gideon heard? On all occasions, when anything approaching adoration has been offered to them, they have emphatically refused it: "*See thou do it not,*" has been their cry, "*I am one of thy fellow-servants: worship GOD.*" †

IV.

After the three arguments already laid down, a fourth follows which is equally indisputable.

This Angel of the Covenant, Who so often appeared to God's saints in the Old Testament period, could not be God the FATHER.

The person of the FATHER, throughout the course of divine revelation, has ever preserved the character of "*The invisible GOD*," as the Apostle Paul frequently denominates Him. ‡ He

* Isa. xliv. 8; xlv. 5, 21, 22; xlvi. 9; Deut. xxxii. 39; iv. 35, 39, &c. To these passages already cited may be added many others, in which Holy Scripture appears to indicate a mysterious plurality in the Divine unity. See Gen. i. 26; iii. 22; Isa. vi. 8. The word Elohim, which is the Hebrew equivalent for God, is moreover a plural name.

† Rev. xxii. 9: xix. 10: see also Acts x. 26; xiv. 14, 15; Col. ii. 18; Matt. vi. 10; Heb. i. 5, 7, 13, 14.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 17; Heb. xi. 27; Col. 1. 15.

has never manifested Himself to man but by His Son. “*He dwelleth*,” says the same apostle, “*in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see*” (1 Tim. vi. 16). “*No man can see My face and live*,” says the LORD Himself (Exod. xxxiii. 20). “*Ye have never heard His voice; nor seen His face*,” says the LORD JESUS of Him (John v. 37; 1 John iv. 12, 20).

Thus it is impossible for it to have been the FATHER, Who thus personally manifested Himself, as recorded in the Old Testament.

V.

Who, then, was this wondrous Angel? We have now arrived at our fifth and final argument.

This Angel of the LORD was none other than the same Saviour, the same Master, the same Friend of sinners, Whose person and Whose work is the subject of the Gospel.

These early manifestations were an anticipation of His incarnation, and of that incomprehensible humiliation, to which He would afterward condescend for our salvation. He it is Who is called “*the image of the invisible GOD, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person*” (Col. i. 15: Heb i. 3). He it is of Whom the apostle Paul says, “*Let all the angels of GOD worship Him*.” It is Him Whom he calls, “*The Great GOD and our Saviour JESUS CHRIST*” (Tit. ii. 13).

Observe, this is not a mere private presumption or human interpretation. It is the explanation authorized by the Scripture itself, in such terms that the HOLY SPIRIT has not seen fit to leave us any sort of doubt.

Hear how the apostle Paul tells us that JESUS CHRIST was this Angel of the LORD, who led the Israelites during the sojourn in the wilderness: “*Neither*,” says he, “*let us tempt CHRIST, as they also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*” “*The Rock of which they drank*,” he says, “*was CHRIST;*” and Moses, placing himself among the afflicted people of God, is said to have

esteemed "*the reproach of CHRIST greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*" (1 Cor. x. 4, 9; Heb. xi. 26).

Hear, again, how the apostle Peter asserts that it was the Spirit of CHRIST that inspired all the ancient prophets (1 Pet. i. 11).

Hear how the evangelist John refers to the vision which Isaiah saw in the year that King Uzziah died, of the LORD sitting upon His throne, high and exalted, while the seraphim covered their faces with their wings before Him, when the LORD charged His prophet, saying, "*Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*" In the twelfth chapter of his gospel John says, "*These things said Esaias, when he saw His,*" namely JESUS CHRIST's, "*glory, and spake of Him.*"

If it should appear strange to you that the LORD should speak at one time in the character of the *Sender*, as in this passage, and at another time in the character of one *Sent*, observe His words in the second chapter of the prophet Zechariah: "*Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I COME, AND I WILL DWELL IN THE MIDST OF THEE, SAITH THE LORD. And many nations shall be joined unto the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I WILL DWELL IN THE MIDST OF THEE, and thou shalt know that the LORD OF HOSTS HATH SENT ME unto thee.*"

But let us now hear JESUS CHRIST Himself. Hear how He says to the Jews, "*Before Abraham was, I AM! Your father Abraham desired to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad*" (John viii. 56—58).

Hear His reply to Philip, who had asked, "*LORD, shew us the FATHER, and it sufficeth us. JESUS saith unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the FATHER: and how sayest thou then, Shew us the FATHER?*" (John xiv. 8, 9). "*I and My FATHER,*" says He in another place, "*are One*" (John x. 30). And again, "*My FATHER worketh hitherto, and I work*" (John v. 17).

"*No man,*" says the evangelist John, "*hath seen GOD at any time: the only begotten SON, which is in the bosom of the*

FATHER, He hath declared Him." And again, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with GOD, and the Word was GOD*" (John i. 1, 2, 14, 18).

Thus we may see it abundantly proved that He Who appeared to Gideon beneath the oak at Ophrah, and Who said to him, "*Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites: Peace be unto thee, fear not: thou shalt not die;*" was the very same Who, 1300 years after Gideon's day, appeared again to Paul at Corinth, and said to him, "*Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace*" (Acts xviii. 9, 10)—the very same Who, some forty years after that, appeared to John in the isle of Patmos, and said, "*Fear not: I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore . . . and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts*" (Rev. i. 17, 18; ii. 23)—the very same Who to the present day assures us, that where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He present in the midst of them (Matt. xviii. 20).*

In short, it is the same Divine Saviour Who is manifested in the Old and in the New Testament. "*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own [place]; but His own [people] received Him not. This is the true GOD, and everlasting life*" (John i. 10, 11; 1 John v. 20).

This doctrine—this glorious doctrine, is like the Sun of the Old Testament Scriptures; it makes all clear; it sheds throughout a blessed light; it reveals, to the believer's eye, the wondrous sublimity and mutual harmony of all God's revelations; it enables him to feel them to be God's "*living oracles*" (Acts vii. 38), for they speak to him of that Saviour Who ever liveth, and Who is always the same.

If this truth is embraced all the Old Testament is explained: the book is opened. If this truth is rejected, there is no solution—

* Observe that Jesus declared this while He was still in the flesh, and was wandering from place to place without "*where to lay His head.*"

there is naught but perplexity and apparent contradiction. It is a closed book, or, in the words of Isaiah, it is become "*as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot: for it is sealed.*"

How precious, on the contrary, how precious is the doctrine of the divinity of the Saviour to the believer who, holding in his hand the volume that contains the Old and the New Testament, can lift his eyes to heaven, and say, "*He changeth not!*" He is with me here in this chamber, where I seek Him: even He "*who gave Himself for my sins*" (Gal i. 4.) He who has said to me in His Word, "*Come unto me, thou soul that labourest, and art heavy laden, and I will give thee rest*" (Matt. xi. 28).





APPENDIX B.

THE TRUMPET'S BLAST.

Extract from "The Valour of Faith; or, the Gospel in the Life of Gideon," by the Rev. G. A. ROGERS, M.A.

WHAT less likely to beat down the strongholds of Satan than the sweet notes which swell from the silver trumpets of the Gospel? How apparently inadequate the means to the end! How weak, how foolish! Men must be fanatics to suppose that men's evil passions will be subdued, that the love of sin will be uprooted, that their affections will ever be turned heavenward, by preaching nothing but "*JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified.*" Human nature, says the world, needs something different. If you wish to convert the heathen, civilize them first, and then preach the Gospel to them. If you would reclaim the ungodly among ourselves, do not shock their prejudices. Adapt your preaching to their tastes, their habits, their associations. If you must blow the trumpet, do not alarm them in their sleep, do not startle them. Give them time to awaken, to look about them, to prepare themselves for the reception of truth. Blow the trumpet softly; please their ears; gratify their tastes; play upon their imaginations; awaken dormant feelings. Show them the unreasonableness of

sin, the beauty of holiness, and the attractiveness of a virtuous life. Thus preach the Gospel—thus blow the trumpet, and all men will be gratified—and “*all men will speak well of you.*”

Thus, men, “*not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of GOD,*” would have the trumpet blown. What would follow were their advice taken? The apostle Paul asks a solemn question, “*If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?*” And the LORD Himself saith, “*If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.*”

We dare not, then, listen to the suggestion, “Preach smooth things.” Our own souls are cast into the scales.

But we ask, whence is this, that man ventures to dictate to God? Whence this presumption of the creature, who turns round upon his Maker, and saith, “Thy trumpet must not sound so loud in mine ears—Thou dost not know my heart—Thou must win me to Thyself by other means.” Alas! men know not that “*the carnal mind is enmity against GOD,*” and, therefore, enmity against the certain, clear, distinct sounds of the Gospel trumpet. When thus they oppose the preaching of the Gospel, they forget the words of the LORD JESUS, “*The TRUTH shall make you free.*”

But let us turn from man to God. He who made the trumpet knew full well its power. He would not put the trumpet into our hands and bid us blow, if the breath of His power were not ready to go forth with the blast.

What saith the LORD? This is the grand question. Paul put the Gospel trumpet to his lips, and sounded forth its notes in Corinth, in Athens, in Ephesus, in Philippi. Did no effects follow? He was oppressed, he was persecuted, he was hated, he was imprisoned, he was stoned. But did man's rage and Satan's fury destroy the power of the trumpet? “*The preaching of the cross,*” he said, “*is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us who are saved, it is the power of GOD.*” Did he soften the tones of the trumpet to suit the ears of men? Did he flatter the polished Athenian? Did he preach philosophy to the learned Corinthian? “*My*

speech, and my preaching," he declares, "*was not of enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the SPIRIT and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of GOD.*" Did he withhold unsavoury truths? Did he lower the standard of the cross to suit the preconceived opinions, the prejudices, the tastes, the character of his hearers? Surely, he tells us, he was "*made all things to all men,*" that he "*pleased all men in all things,*" and "*sought to give none offence.*" Did he, therefore, compromise the truth? Was he a disciple of expediency? Did he seek to win souls to CHRIST and Heaven by blowing other than the Gospel trumpet, or by inventing a method by which its loud and clear notes might harmonize with the cadence of man's sins? Nay, standing on the Rock of Ages, and raising the silver trumpet to his lips, he sounded forth in the ears of the Church of Ephesus, "*Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of GOD*" (Acts xx. 26, 27).

We know the results of such trumpets' blasts. No human, no Satanic power could stand against them. The walls of Jericho fell down flat before the sound of the trumpets of rams' horns, and the shout of the people. Higher and still stronger walls than those which surrounded Jericho have fallen before the clear notes of the Gospel. The powers of darkness quail before this trumpet. The dead in trespasses and sins hear the voice of the SON OF GOD, and they that hear do live, and live for ever. Whilst "*an uncertain sound,*" a gospel which is not the Gospel, settles men in their sins, and causes sport to devils, the clear blast of this trumpet shakes the infernal kingdom to its centre, spreads jubilee among the slaves of earth, and awakens joy in the presence of angels. Ah! could we but.....encompass the enemy's camp, and blow the trumpet; could we but engirdle the whole earth with the sweet notes of the everlasting Gospel, confusion, dismay, terror, and destruction would reign amongst the hosts of CHRIST's enemies. Israel would be saved, and GOD would be glorified.

We pause to ask you, dear reader, how these gladsome notes sounded in your ears? Has this trumpet aroused you? Has it

called you to a sense of your danger? Has it startled you in your sins? Has it destroyed fatal slumberings? Has the trumpet put you to flight? Has it led you to flee into the arms of JESUS from the wrath to come? If it has not done this, we know of no other trumpet to arouse you. If the silver trumpet fail to awaken you, you "*would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*"

But, oh! I would ask you "*how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?*" What hope remains, if God's voice in His Gospel do not awaken you? Are you prepared to resist every call? Is your heart stout enough to hear every blast of the trumpet? What if you despise those that blow—what if they be men of like passions with yourselves—will you turn a deaf ear to the music of the Gospel which swells from their lips? It may appear a small thing to despise or neglect the trumpet *now*: but what will become of those who learn for the first time to obey its summons, when "*the LORD Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of GOD?*"





APPENDIX C.

ON FAMILY PRAYER.

A SERMON BY PASTOR N. RECOLIN, OF THE REFORMED CHURCH
AT PARIS.

“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

My Brethren,

Among those ordinances which our fathers, the early Protestants honoured, there is one which in our days is sadly neglected. It is a very simple ordinance, and yet it appeals to our tenderest feelings: namely, that of FAMILY PRAYER.

Let us go back, in thought, to the days of those whose name we are so happy to bear, and whose faith we profess still to hold. Let us imagine ourselves present at the family gathering. In the morning, before the hour fixed for the first meal, or in the evening, just before the party breaks up to retire to rest* all the members of the household are assembled, parents, children, servants. While all sit around the head of the house in silence and attention,

* In many families, especially when there are young children who would thus be excluded, an earlier hour for family devotion may perhaps more profitably be arranged. [G. W. B.]

he opens the large old Bible, that has been laid before him, and, in a solemn tone, reads a page of holy writ to his little congregation. All, young and old, listen with interest while he reads, or while he explains the meaning, or while the mother suggests some affectionate application of the lesson; or while one of the little ones proposes some childlike question. And then they all kneel down, and the head of the family pours forth a short and fervent prayer: he dedicates to God the day that has now begun, or commits himself and his loved ones to His fatherly care during the coming night: on his country, on his children, on his friends, on himself—on all, a Heavenly FATHER's blessing is implored; everything that concerns them is made a matter of prayer, their labours, their plans, their joys, their sorrows. But, beloved brethren, how have times changed! Where, in our own days, and in our own social circles, shall we find the families in which this godly usage of our ancestors has been retained? Where are the parents who thus constitute their home a temple, "*holy unto the LORD*," in which He is worshipped "*in spirit and in truth?*" What has become of this ordinance so eminently characteristic both of Christian piety, and of Protestant faith? Alas! you know it, we are compelled to admit it, beyond the bare reminiscence of this beautiful ordinance, too often, no further trace is left.

That I may call attention to this deeply to be regretted, but yet almost universal neglect,* or rather, in the ardent desire to see a revival of ancient piety amongst us, I have thought it my duty to refer very specially to this deplorable omission of Family Prayer. And it is to you, fathers and mothers, that I more particularly address myself: from you the defect arises: it is for you to make it good. In doing so I might take high ground, and present the subject before you as a matter of duty, an obligation as binding, and as sacred as that which has brought you into this sanctuary to-day for *public* worship: but I will not

* We rejoice to know that the case is not thus in this country: and yet in how many homes in great Britain is Family Prayer omitted; and in how many more, to the actual prejudice of religion, is it a mere matter of dreary and perfunctory routine! [G. W. B.]

take this high ground ; but will rather appeal to you by your most cherished interests, both temporal and eternal, and will set before you the advantages that will accrue from this pious practice. Happy shall I be, my dear brethren, if the result of this friendly discourse should be to bring you to humble yourselves before God for your neglect, and to resolve to take the matter at once in hand. If so, my prayer will have been accomplished. If so, we shall once more hear in these our days of spiritual degeneracy that determined utterance of Joshua, which forms our text :—

“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

I shall suppose the case of a family as it is ordinarily composed, namely, consisting of parents, children, and servants, and I shall consider with you the effect that Family Prayer is likely to exert upon each member of the home.

In this inquiry, where, fathers and mothers, shall I begin if it be not at those who are dearest to you in the world, namely, your children ? Yes, it is toward your children that your eyes are turned ; it is upon them your anxieties are centred ; it is in their behalf that you desire the support of pure religion,—the only principle that is able to impart innocence to childhood ; to control the passions, and correct the errors of youth ; and to secure a useful and well-spent after-life. Well, then, one of the most simple forms of manifestation, one of the most effectual methods of operation that genuine Gospel religion can present for your adoption is, without contradiction, found in Family Prayer. Do you doubt it ? Let us endeavour to trace the course of the moral history of the child who has been present where this practice has daily been observed.

No sooner has he left his cradle, and the first rays of intelligence have begun to dawn, than he is taught to join in the domestic worship. At his mother's bidding he leaves his little toys and seats himself at her feet. He does not understand, it is true, much of what is going on around him ; but at least he is trained to obedience, and taught to act under other influences than those of pleasure and convenience. He early learns the lesson that there is

a time for play, and a time to sit still: he is disciplined to observe order, rule, and silence. Look closely at him at the time of Family Prayer, and you will notice from time to time an expression of seriousness and of reverence that will surprise you: you will perceive that there is an impressiveness and solemnity in this service that already arrests and captivates his attention. Like a tiny germ, this small beginning of interest in spiritual things will hereafter bear its precious fruits.

By degrees the child grows older; his intellect expands; his moral sense is developed; conceptions of God, of duty, of sin, and of the Gospel scheme of grace are formed within his heart and understanding. His mother, in exhorting him to duty, or in reprobating his faults, can enforce her admonitions by an appeal to religious principles. She is able to refer to the holiness of God, His hatred of sin, and His omnipotence. She can remind him of the wisdom and the pity of Jesus, Whose history he has so often heard read. The child listens, and he understands. What a powerful moral lever is now in the mother's hand! How did she obtain it? Has it come in the natural course of events? Is the ordinary development of the infant mind the cause? Is it the result of the religious instruction of the school? No doubt this has helped; but is not something—nay, is not much to be attributed to the Family Prayer, at which, day by day, under varied forms, the same facts and the same doctrines have gradually been engraven upon his memory, and still more upon his conscience? Gospel truth has already, like the first glimmering ray of the sun at early dawn, begun to shed light and warmth around.

Let us consider the same child at a later stage, namely, as he passes from childhood into youth. An important epoch in his life is drawing nigh. He is at the age when he is about to receive the instruction of the Church, and to be prepared to become one of its recognised members. Ah! it is now that the happy effects of Family Prayer will especially become apparent. While those of his young companions who have not enjoyed the same privilege will, in many cases, have reached this period in a state of profound ignorance, your child presents himself to the pastor already well grounded by a preparatory course that has commenced.

with his earliest days, and has never been intermitted. He is familiar with the Gospel narrative. He has heard all the principal details of the life of the Saviour and of the lives of His apostles read and explained; and he is already generally acquainted with the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. To him the instruction imparted will not be, as for many of his fellow-candidates, a painful necessity, a troublesome task that must be got through as soon as possible; but he will take the deepest interest therein as a personal preparation for the most sacred of ordinances of Divine worship. Now when thus Family Prayer prepares the way for public religious instruction, and when public religious instruction confirms the teaching of Family Prayer—when the prayers and admonitions of parents are followed up by the prayers and admonitions of the Christian pastor, what good ground have we to hope that the young heart will be impressed, and that the first participation of the LORD'S SUPPER—an occasion so solemn, but, alas! often so lightly regarded—will be to him one of holy joy and spiritual edification.

At length he reaches the time to which you, his parents, look forward with such mingled feelings of glad anticipation and glowing foreboding—I mean the time when he has grown to be a young man, and must enter upon his own career of life. With what anxiety have you watched his arrival at this age, when the passions are at their strongest, and when parental control is in abeyance! With what solicitude have you considered how you might best maintain your influence, which never seemed so much needed as at this very time when it seems likely to operate no longer. How have you yearned that you might be the means of guarding the soul of your child from the contamination of a wicked world! Well, then, among other instrumentalities of which I need not speak, do not neglect—nay, use more diligently than ever that of Family Prayer. If your child still remains beneath the paternal roof, he will hear you plead every day that God will keep him from every fall and from every ill: he will see your anxiety: he will know what are the dearest desires of your heart. How can this teaching, though indirect, yet so impressive and so genuine, fail to produce an effect? And should he go from home

....yes: should he go from home, think not that these prayers, these admonitions will be lost upon him: he will think of them again: he will certainly think of them again. But should it come to pass that, enticed in an evil hour by this witching world; and impelled by the storm of youthful passions he should come to forget them, yet go on praying for him at your family devotions, God hears these prayers and sighs, and sooner or later, be assured of it, His goodness and His mercy will fall upon the head of your straying child like a sweet refreshing shower from heaven.

I have intentionally delayed while dwelling with you, dear brethren, upon the topic so dear to you—your children. But have I nothing to say to you in reference to another class that is represented in most of our houses; and whose very designation indicates their connection therewith as members of it—I mean your *domestic* servants? Were I to pass them by in silence, I should, no doubt, more fully conform to the self-seeking spirit of our age, which seems to like to regard them in the light of mere hirelings, procured to attend upon the temporal interests of their employers, or, sometimes, even to gratify each capricious and unseasonable requirement. I should, however, be setting aside the authority of that Gospel which teaches us to recognise in them, in them especially, souls that are committed to our keeping, and for whom we shall one day have to give account. You accept this view of the case, my dear brethren, do you not? You wish to do good to your servants: you desire to requite their services to you in temporal things by conferring spiritual benefits upon them. Well, then, here is a means of effecting this (that is, if they are of the same religion with yourself), namely, Family Prayer.

First of all, their attendance hereat elevates their position in their own esteem: they feel it to be an honour to be thus associated with their master and mistress in devotional exercises: they feel that they are not despised nor forgotten: they learn self-respect; they recognise their privileges; their hopes are raised. It has been truly said that “nobility constrains men to be noble:” thus by treating them with esteem you incline them to shun those vices

which a lower estimate of their moral standing tends to beget: as greediness, falsehood, cunning, and pilfering.

But perhaps you are uneasy lest in developing a sense of self-respect, you should thereby diminish the sense of subordination in your servants. If so, you are mistaken. On the contrary, you will find that instead of being diminished, this will have been increased more than ever. For, observe: if Family Prayer sets the dignity of servants before them, still more does it set their duty before them. The pure and holy Gospel that is read and expounded to them keeps them in their proper place. Is it not hence that they receive the precious rule that, if obeyed, ensures the rights of the heads of houses, and the faithful discharge of the duties of servants—“*Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh: not with eyerservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing GOD?*” (Col. iii. 22). Then again, Christian heads of houses, the seriousness, the earnestness, the love with which you conduct this service, and which you maintain in all your relations with your inferiors, will suffice to keep far away any thought of familiarity and disrespect. When they hear you earnestly praying for them, they cannot but love you; and how can one help respecting those whom one loves? Yes, be assured of it, their attachment will from day to day become deeper, more tender, more disinterested, until it will assume the character of that mingled devotion and veneration that was so common in bygone days, but which is in our days so rare.

Howsoever that may be, do not forget that the time spent at Family Prayer is for your servants the only time when they have the opportunity of seriously considering the eternal interests of their souls. They have not the leisure, their minds are not at rest, they have not the inclination to think of these things at other times. The demands upon their energies are often so numerous, so overwhelming. If we ourselves find it difficult to secure the time for retiring to the solitude of our closet, how much more so must it be for those who have all day long to be at the beck and call of others. Sometimes they cannot even attend public worship. But could they do so, how inadequate is public worship, if unaccompanied by other means of grace, to operate upon

their heart and understanding ! In Family Worship, all is brought within their reach. Accustomed by degrees to their master's voice and mode of expression, they soon receive and acquire a grasp of the truths presented to them. Now, may we not venture to believe that these truths, accompanied by Divine grace, will sooner or later produce an effect upon them, and that this service will do to the natural ignorance and prejudice of the heart what the trickling of water drop by drop does for the hardest stone, namely, wears it and wastes it away.

But I come now to yourselves, my dear brethren. Family Prayer tends to act beneficially upon your own minds and your own hearts. As men; as husbands; as heads of houses; you have every thing to gain from the observance of this holy usage.

As men, you know it; you cannot "*live by bread alone*;" you need a supply of food from heaven. It is just the same with you as with your servants and your children. You carry within you an immortal soul that requires to be enlightened, converted, saved. But in order to the attainment of these great results, what temptations have you to surmount, what obstacles to overcome ! The engagements, the distractions, the occupations—I will not go on to mention the pleasures—of life interrupt you and turn you aside. You can scarcely find a few minutes at night and morning for prayer: it may be that you have even long since neglected prayer altogether. But your conscience is ill at ease: your heart sighs and groans: you cannot make up your mind to live a heathen life in a Christian country; you cannot dispense with communion with GOD. Well, then, begin at once and institute the custom of Family Prayer in your houses. This will be the means of your spiritual restoration. This will bring you that inward relief that you have been craving. Here you may divest yourself of the burden of your business and your cares: yes, you may do more than this: here, you may lay that burden as it were at the feet of that LORD Who will give you grace to bear it; and will Himself bear it with you. Here you will learn to know yourself, your position, your requirements, your responsibilities, and your re-

sources. Here you will clearly and correctly hear the message of Scripture. Here, too, will the voice of your own conscience be heard. Having to instruct others, you will feel the need of clear views yourself; and seeking to obtain these, you will soon find means to obtain leisure for reading, prayer, and meditation for your own personal edification: * and doing this, you will be "*not far from the kingdom of GOD.*"

As husbands, you will gather most precious fruits from Family Prayer. I will but mention one, which will perhaps appeal to the experience of some persons present. You are aware, my dear brethren, that, as a necessary consequence of the existence of sin in our hearts, there are, even in the experience of those who are most happily assorted, occasional jars and misunderstandings. What husband, what wife, after one of those mutual differences that arise out of the infirmity of human nature, does not feel that a cloud, so to speak, has come over the spirit, darkening the horizon of earth's brightest hope and purest happiness. Now what better, surer, speedier means can be found for the laying of the storm than is provided in Family Prayer? How are we brought together in prayer? Is not the heart the medium? And how will the husband venture to pray for his partner or the wife for her husband, if at the same time they are entertaining feelings of irritation and vexation towards one another? Their embarrassment would be too evident to be permitted: their separation would be too painful to be endured. As the fixed hour draws near, they hasten to become reconciled, and to exchange the tokens of affection; the act of uniting in prayer touches their feelings and melts their hearts: they realize the fact that they love one another—yes, more dearly than ever, and kneeling together they

* This matter of personal preparation is most important. Pastor Recolin, in a later section (p. 377), tacitly draws an analogy between the Public Worship of the Sanctuary and this "Divine Service" in the Home; nor is it less essential, in order that Family Prayer may become an efficient, and withal a delightful exercise, that he who conducts it should sanctify himself by previous meditation, than that the preacher should prepare his Sabbath sermon. [G. W. B.]

bless God that He has not only joined them together, but that, by the influence of His HOLY SPIRIT, He has been pleased to maintain and to cement their union.

Finally, as heads of families, what an important opportunity does Family Prayer furnish you for employing the sacred privilege that God has conferred upon you as a master and as a father! This service which you render to the LORD with all your household around you, does it not afford a most impressive illustration of your rights, your dignity, and your moral greatness? At such times, fathers of families, you are the spiritual pastors of your children and your servants. You are the dispensers of His favours. You are the preachers of His truth and of His love. Sublime ministry! Blessed priesthood! This holy worship in which you officiate will bring upon yourselves and upon your house, not only the esteem of man, but also the mercies of your Father who is in Heaven.

Such, my dear brethren, are the benefits which this impressive ordinance confers upon the principal members of the family. Did time permit, we could have shown you that this beneficial influence is not less requisite nor less perceptible in regard to other persons whom you may have with you in your houses. Think of the aged, who can no longer attend public worship, and who, warned by the token of the hoary head of the proximity of death and of eternity, will thankfully receive from your lips the Word of life. Then there are the sick and delicate, who are in so much need of consolation and encouragement, and on whom the pastor's visits can but be at distant intervals. Your guests,* too,

* Most precious is the opportunity that Family Prayer affords for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in the social circle. All men are not called to occupy the pulpit, but let every Christian home be a "*Bethel*"—a house of God—in which He is honoured by daily worship. Be our guests who they may, let us never omit this service, or postpone its observances until they have dispersed. How profitable thus may our mutual intercourse become, sanctified by united communion with God! [G. W. B.]

must not be forgotten, whether relations or friends, who come to partake of your hospitality, and to share the joys of your domestic circle: and to whom your good example in this particular may prove salutary.

And how would it be if we could travel beyond the actual limits of the family, and trace out the effects of Family Prayer—namely, its edifying effects upon the Church, and its sanctifying effects upon society at large? We should see that in proportion as Family Prayer was resumed, in that proportion our church services—often, alas! so dull and so cold—were becoming more hearty and more animated; and that our sermons, that are everywhere producing such scanty fruits, were becoming more spiritual and more powerful. The churches that are now languishing for lack of a good foundation of fervent piety at home, would, so to speak, be wakened from the sleep of death to vitality and action.

As with home-life so with the Church; and as with the Church so with society. Yes, we could show you how this ameliorating influence is diffused in the world around us, and tends to mould men's ideas, beliefs, characters, and customs. We might point to other countries, and discern in their case, that there is no real prosperity when there is no real religion; and that there is no real religion when there is no piety in the homes of the people; and that this piety is both maintained and promoted by Family Prayer; but time fails me: consider what I have advanced; continue the study for yourselves, completing my omissions; ponder the matter with prayerful attention, and then carry the conclusion you are led to draw into execution. If you do so, I am sure that you will be led not only to accept, but heartily to adopt the lesson of our subject; and in a real and in a practical way to enter into Joshua's resolution, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!*"

Why not, my dear brethren? Why not repeat, in your turn, Joshua's noble, Joshua's solemn words? Why not put your hand at once to the blessed work of setting up, and establishing what has been well named, "*A Family Altar?*" Have you any

argument against it? Have you any excuse to plead? But your excuses and your arguments will not bear examination. They will all fall to the ground before a resolute and determined will.

“It is not manly,” say some, “to go down upon one’s knees with one’s wife, one’s children, and one’s servants.”—“Not manly!” But is it not consistent with true manliness and true greatness to abase oneself and bow the knee before one’s Creator and one’s God? Go, learn that there is more moral dignity and elevation in this act of adoration, and withal a truer realization of our actual position, than in the haughtiest indifference of a scornful world.

“But we have not the time,” cry others.—You have not time! Is it really so, my dear brother? You can easily find time to gather your family around you to take food for your bodies; and can you not find time for divine nourishment? You have not time! but the hard-working artizan finds time: the members of the poor family who live from hand to mouth find time: they, in many cases, would not pass a single day without having knelt together before the Lord. You have not time! Then woe unto you! for if you have not time to seek God with your family, by the same rule you have not time for repentance—you have not time to be saved. Ah! say rather that it is not so much that you want the time, as that *the time wants you*; and that as to time, that could soon be found, if only the will and inclination were not at fault.

“The want of time is not my difficulty,” says a third objector, “what I want is the ability. How can I instruct my family when conscious of needing to be instructed myself, and to have livelier faith, clearer light, deeper experiences?” Good, my brother, is this acknowledgment of your spiritual infirmities; and yet these constitute no reason why you should decline the duty. Oh, begin at once, and do not put it off! God will bless your efforts, and your aspirations. He will accept your worship in all its imperfection. Do you feel unable to expound the Scripture? Then, at all events, read a chapter with your family. Do you feel unable to offer prayer *ex tempore*? Then for the

present make use of one of those excellent manuals of devotion which have expressed the spiritual needs of others before you ; read one of the simple forms of petition herein with serious thought and humble spirit ; and in due time you will learn to frame requests yourself. But what shall I say to you, dear sister, who hast lost the comfort and support of him who was the head of your house ? Ah, do not hesitate to gather your children and your maidens around you for Family Prayer ! Who that has any right feeling can gainsay the propriety of your so doing ? He who should at first find fault will probably himself ere long commend you.

No, my dear brethren, there are no reasons, no real excuses for the omission of Family Prayer. Let it not, then, be deferred or declined. The case demands immediate treatment. The deficiency must be made good : and it is to you, to all who are fathers and mothers, that I make appeal. “ *To your tents, O Israel, to your tents !* ” Now is the hopeful juncture. We have reached that season of the year when families are reunited. Would you have a truly “ Happy New Year,” fruitful in peace and concord, and in healthy moral and spiritual progress ? Then let every householder build within his dwelling “ *an altar unto the LORD.* ”

And O Thou FATHER of lights, from Whom alone cometh down “ *every good gift, and every perfect gift,* ” grant unto us both to will and to do whatsoever pleaseth Thee, that so, from each one of our habitations there may rise before Thy throne this invocation, “ *Behold me,* ” O my GOD, “ *and the children whom Thou hast given me !* ” AMEN.



ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA.

LECTURE I., p. 2, note.

ERRATUM.—*For "personal narratives" read "own narrative."*

LECTURE III., p. 34.

The similarity of language in Rahab's good confession to that of Deut. iv. 39 (pointed out in our Reference Bibles) is very striking. Shall we regard it as a mere coincidence of expression? Was it not, rather, a conscious quotation, and an acknowledgment of the inspired words of Moses, which had been reported to her, and treasured in her breast?

ERRATA.—p. 33, l. 5, *for "dying" read "dyeing."*

p. 35, l. 20, *for "extasies" read "extasies."*

LECTURE VIII., pp. 133, 134.

The operation of Joshua's anathema may be traced in the complaint, 2 Kings ii. 19. Thus wondrously does God's Word confirm God's Word throughout.

LECTURE XIII., p. 236.

On the staying of the sun and moon, Dean Bagot, in a recently published work on the Inspiration of Holy Scripture, aptly says that the language employed is that of *description*, and not of *definition*.



BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

THE BOOK OF THE GENERATION OF
JESUS CHRIST:

A NEW

EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFICULTIES

CONNECTED WITH THE

GENEALOGY OF OUR LORD.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

CRITICISMS.

“The solution Mr. Butler suggests is simple, by no means improbable, and supported with a considerable weight of argument. The pamphlet is interesting, able, and likely to carry conviction to many readers.”—*Record*.

“An explanation which, while it will be new to most students, must be allowed to be very ably and ingeniously supported.”—*Jewish Intelligence*.

“The Rev. G. W. Butler deals at some length with the difficulties that have beset this point, upon which he throws considerable light.”—*Rock*.

“The argument seems satisfactory, both negatively, against the current theories of reconciliation; and positively, in favour of your own solution.”—*Rev. G. Tonge, M.A., Sparkbrook, Birmingham*.

LONDON :

HAUGHTON & CO., 10, Paternoster Row.

EDINBURGH : W. OLIPHANT & CO.





